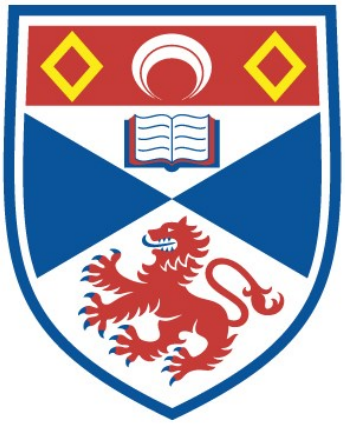
THE CHRISTOLOGICAL THOUGHT OF PETER TAYLOR FORSYTH AND EMIL BRUNNER : A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Frank Fitzgerald Jones

A Thesis Submitted for the Degree of PhD
at the
University of St Andrews



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THE CHRISTOLOGICAL THOUGHT OF PETER TAYLOR FORSYTH AND EMIL BRUNNER: A COMPARATIVE STUDY

Being a thesis presented by
Frank Fitzgerald Jones
in the University of St. Andrews
in application for degree of Ph.D.

St. Mary's College
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Declaration

I hereby declare that the following Thesis is based on the results of research carried out by me, that the Thesis is my own composition, and that it has not previously been presented for a Higher Degree. The Research was carried out in St. Mary's College, The University of St. Andrews, under the direction of Professor N. H. G. Robinson.

Frank F. Jones

Certificate

I certify that Frank Fitzgerald Jones has spent twelve terms in Research Work at St. Mary's College, The University of St. Andrews, and that he has fulfilled the Conditions of Ordinance Number 16 (St. Andrews University) and that he is qualified to submit the accompanying Thesis in application for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Supervisor

ACADEMIC CAREER

Frank Fitzgerald Jones received an elementary and high school education in the public school system of Augusta county in Virginia. Later studies were undertaken at Hampden-Sydney College, Hampden-Sydney, Virginia, where his major subjects were Latin and French and where he was granted the Bachelor of Arts degree, *magna cum laude*. After a three-year program of study at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, he received the Th.B. degree from this institution; post-graduate courses in the Arabic and German languages being completed in Princeton University at the same time. From Austin Presbyterian Theological Seminary of Austin, Texas, he received the degree of Master of Theology. In the autumn of 1966 he matriculated at the University of St. Andrews and began research in the field of Systematic Theology in St. Mary's College. The thesis now being presented is the result of this research.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First of all in these acknowledgments deep appreciation is expressed to my supervisor, Professor Norman H. G. Robinson, for his counsel and guidance during the progress of this research. Professor Robinson's extensive knowledge of the works and thought of P. T. Forsyth and Emil Brunner and incisive comments in lectures and writings on the theological viewpoints of these men could have furnished scores of apt quotations for the thesis.

I am also grateful to Dr. James I. McCord of Princeton, New Jersey, who during the time of his deanship in Austin Presbyterian Seminary of Austin, Texas, greatly stimulated my incipient interest in the Christological thought of Forsyth and Brunner.

Members of the entire faculty of St. Mary's College have shown kindness and provided inspiration in innumerable ways. Miss M. C. Blackwood of the secretarial staff and her associates have given cheerful and competent assistance

on numerous occasions. In fact, all who relate to the on-going life and great tradition of the College have a share in this offering of humble and sincere thanks.

The patient and efficient help of librarians and assistants in the University of St. Andrews and the service rendered by the library staffs of the University of Zürich, the University of London, and the Speer Library of Princeton Theological Seminary are thankfully acknowledged.

To my family and to my brothers and sisters who have maintained a loving and loyal interest in my theological pursuits and who have given so much support, both tangible and intangible, to this venture of my mature years I am truly and deeply grateful.

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CHAPTER I

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CHRISTOLOGICAL THOUGHT OF FORSYTH AND BRUNNER

1. The Problem and Method of the Thesis

The problem of the thesis is to determine, expound, and compare critically the Christological thought of Peter Taylor Forsyth and Heinrich Emil Brunner and on the basis of such a procedure to endeavour to ascertain those elements in the thought of each theologian which seem to make a positive and viable contribution to the construction of an evangelical Christology. In an effort to identify the central issues in the history of Christian dogma which underlie their thought, a survey of the major classical issues will precede the exposition and critical comparison. In turn, this survey will provide the standard Christological categories to be used for interpretive and evaluative purposes in this thesis.

The orderly exposition of the thought of Forsyth and Brunner with respect to the Person and Work of Christ, as their thinking is seen over against major Christological issues and categories, should serve to identify their respective viewpoints in relation to that concept of the

doctrine of Christ commonly held in the evangelical tradition of the Church. It is hoped that the critical comparison of the main Christological emphases of Forsyth and Brunner will bring to the surface of the discussion certain valuable insights which are of promise in the construction and reconstruction of Christology -- an ever pressing and never ending task of the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

A large part of this first chapter will be devoted to major issues of Christology as these issues have arisen in the formulation of Christian doctrine. "Christology" means doctrinal thought concerning the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. By a survey I intend no more than the discovery and summary presentation of the major Christological issues that have been defined and dealt with by the Church in the course of her history.

In the second and third chapters the doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ in the teaching of Forsyth and Brunner is successively expounded. The purpose of this exposition is to bring into focus the theological presuppositions and methodology of these two thinkers, followed by the statement and clarification of their concepts, inclusive of certain analyses deemed contributive to the objective understanding of their Christological thought.

In the fourth chapter the key phrase is "critical comparison." This phrase signifies the procedure of

examining, in the light of stated norms, the distinctive components in the Christological thought of Forsyth and Brunner by setting in juxtaposition their similar and differing views for the purpose of discovering and crystallizing those elements which are believed to have abiding worth for Christological construction. The summary will include those doctrinal constituents which, in the course of the discussion, have appeared to be especially contributive to a viable and evangelical Christology.

There are necessary and specific limitations to this thesis with reference to subject matter. Although both men wrote on subjects indirectly related to Christology, the doctrine of Christ will be considered here primarily from the standpoint of systematic theology. There will be no investigation of the philosophy of religion, Christian ethics, or other disciplines that bear an undoubted relation to theology. Furthermore, there is no intention to deal with the doctrines of systematic theology as a whole but specifically with the doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ as understood and interpreted by Peter Taylor Forsyth, a British theologian, and Emil Brunner, a Continental theologian. Other articles of Christian dogma will be considered only when they are directly involved with the Christological thought of these two men.

In the second place, while there have been and are

many diverse views of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, primary attention will be given to those that have been promulgated by Forsyth and Brunner. References to other views will be made only for comparative purposes. The exposition of Forsyth's and Brunner's thought is restricted to the areas indicated in the outline of the chapters, which both includes major Christological issues and omits minor ones. Prior to this exposition attention will be given to those points and propositions of Christology that have emerged from the conflicts, controversies and deep searching for the larger truth that have been a part of the ongoing life of the Christian Church for almost two millennia. The aim will be to clarify historic issues in such a way as to provide a conceptual perspective for understanding, expounding and critically comparing the Christological thought of Forsyth and Brunner.

In the third place, among the criteria that might be used for the examination and evaluation of the teachings in question, this thesis will limit itself to the two following norms which will be explained in greater detail at the beginning of Chapter Four:

The first standard of judgment will be the self-consistency of the doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ as this doctrine is set forth by each theologian. This standard will be applied to their similar and differ-

ing views as they are systematically considered.

The second norm will be coherency with the evangelical experience of the Church as that experience relates to One who, in the time-honoured confession, "For us men, and for our salvation, came down from heaven."

There are also specific limitations with respect to resource material. The bulk of the Christological data collated in the last section of this chapter has been provided by a relatively small number of scholarly books and reference works. Titles, authors (or editors) and additional facts of publication are included in the bibliography. Those quoted directly, or from which abstracts are taken, also appear in the footnotes. While the writer has read extensively in the Fathers and other theologians of the past, and is indebted to them for important information, no direct quotations will be given.

The numerous books and articles written by Forsyth will serve as primary source material from which his thought on the subject of Christology will be derived. Articles and books written about this remarkable man and his theology will serve as secondary sources. Of very great value for this thesis are the volumes by Forsyth entitled: The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, The Principle of Authority, The Justification of God, God the Holy Father, The Work of Christ, and The Cruciality of the Cross.

In the development of his theological doctrines Brunner has comprehensively expounded his understanding of their central meaning in the three volumes of his Dogmatics under the titles: The Christian Doctrine of God, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, and The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation. Both his own numerous books and articles and those written about his theological viewpoints are contributive in that they have to do with his total Christian theology, which cannot be separated from his Christological thought. However, along with the volumes in the above series, of prime value for this thesis are the following works: The Mediator, The Divine-Human Encounter (or Encounter With Truth), and Revelation and Reason. As is true of writings by and about Forsyth a listing of all primary and secondary sources relating to Brunner, which have been read and which have contributed in a greater or less degree toward the furtherance of this undertaking, will appear in the bibliography at the end of the thesis. Those specifically quoted or referred to will also have a place in the footnotes.

Since the primary theme of this dissertation has to do with the doctrine of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ, there apparently exists a need for the delineation of the main Christological issues that have been defined and dealt with by the Church down through Christian history. There-

fore, brief résumés of these issues will be set forth later in this chapter. These will provide the standard and historical categories, the requisite frame of reference, for investigating the Person and Work of Christ in the thought of P. T. Forsyth and Emil Brunner.

Consecutively, in the second and third chapters, there will be expositions of the Christologies of the two theologians. It is firmly assumed that a knowledge of their theological presuppositions and methodology should prove invaluable in properly understanding and interpreting their Christological views. Therefore it is the writer's aim to give these subjects prior and careful treatment in the first section of each chapter.

For the purpose of gleaning from the examined doctrines the views and concepts believed to have positive and abiding value, Chapter Four will be a critical comparison of major Christological elements in the theology of Forsyth and Brunner. Their compared thought will be evaluated in the light of the norms which have been previously stated. In conclusion, an ordered summary will be given of the "findings" that have resulted from this investigation which are considered to be fruitful in the formulation and reformulation of a doctrine of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

It would be a regrettable omission if brief biog-

raphies of Forsyth and Brunner were not included in the early pages of this thesis. The next two sections will therefore be devoted to this matter.

2. A Biographical Sketch of P. T. Forsyth[1]

In keeping with the spirit of Forsyth himself who, in the recollection of his daughter, Mrs. Jessie Forsyth Andrews, once said: "I hope no one will ever write a dreary official full-dress biography of me," a very brief account of his life and work will be both proper and adequate.

Peter Taylor, son of Isaac and Elspet Forsyth, was born in Aberdeen, Scotland, May 12, 1848. The parents, people of modest means, were lifelong members of the Blackfriars Street Congregational Church of Aberdeen. Their son received his early education in the local Grammar School and, despite straitened circumstances of the senior Forsyths, Peter was able to enter Aberdeen University where

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1. Although they will not be directly quoted, the chief sources of material for this thumb-nail sketch are: W. L. Bradley, P. T. Forsyth - The Man and his Work (London: Independent Press Ltd., 1952), pp. 13-63; R. M. Brown, P. T. Forsyth: Prophet for Today (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1952), pp. 17-26; Harry Escott (ed.), P. T. Forsyth 1848-1921 - Director of Souls (London: The Epworth Press, 1948), pp. xvii-xx; John H. Rodgers, The Theology of P. T. Forsyth (London: Independent Press Ltd., 1965), pp. 2-10; Jessie Forsyth Andrews, "Memoir" in The Work of Christ by P. T. Forsyth (London: Independent Press Ltd., 1948), pp. vii-xxix; and a personal interview graciously granted to the writer by Mrs. Andrews in her residence near Crawley, Sussex, England, on December 7, 1968.

he graduated with first class honours in classics. In 1870 he spent a very important semester at Göttingen, studying under the renowned Albrecht Ritschl. This semester not only put the young man under the influence of Ritschl, but also greatly increased his proficiency in the German language -- two important factors in his later "theological" life. Returning to England, he entered New College, Hampstead, where his stay was cut short because of ill health. In 1876 he was called to be pastor of the Congregational Church, Shipley, Yorkshire. The next twenty-five years were divided among five different parishes, including University Emmanuel Congregational Church in Cambridge.

Certain biographical events can be identified as being highly significant in fashioning the life and work of Peter Taylor Forsyth. In 1877 he married Minna Magness, who was a source of great courage and strength to the young pastor in his early ministry. Their marriage was blessed with a daughter, an only child, Jessie. During those years Forsyth expended much time and intellectual energy on the doctrinal interpretation of the Scriptures along evangelical lines. So influential was he in this enterprise that he became known as the chief exponent of the Neo-evangelical movement in England.

During his fourth pastorate Forsyth received and accepted a call to become pastor of Emmanuel Church in

Cambridge, but was forced to take a three months' sick leave before entering upon his labours there. A week after arriving in Cambridge his spirit was deeply overshadowed by the sudden death of his wife. The next four years were marked by great physical and nervous weakness, with even the threat of a lapse into hypochondria. However, during those unhappy years events took place which were in large measure to shape an impressive future career. In 1895 Forsyth received an honorary Doctorate from the University of Aberdeen. In 1896 he was Congregational Union preacher for the Autumnal Assembly at Leicester and delivered a sermon, "The Holy Father," regarded by many as a pulpit discourse of outstanding excellence. Two books were published that same year and two the next.

The real turning point of Forsyth's life came with his second marriage to Bertha Ison in 1897. This charming and devoted woman was a true helpmate and unfailing inspiration, helping her husband to focus on the future rather than the past. There followed for him a great upsurge of physical and intellectual vigour. In 1897 he was invited to serve as the English delegate to the International Congregational Council which convened that year in Boston. Forsyth read a paper before the Council on "The Evangelical Principle of Authority," capturing the minds of his audience by the substance of his message and

by the power of his presentation. From this time on he enjoyed an international reputation as a theologian and a preacher.

The acceptance of an offer of the Principalship of Hackney College, Hampstead, marked the terminus of Forsyth's preaching ministry as such, and the beginning of his teaching ministry. During this tenure of office fame continued to accrue to him as writer, teacher and preacher. In 1910 he became Dean of the Faculty of Theology in the University of London. This followed naturally since in that year Hackney College was recognized as the Divinity School for the University. In this position Peter Taylor Forsyth continued to be stimulating and inspiring in his teaching, prophetic and profound in his preaching, and prolific in his writing until his death on November 11, 1921.

3. A Biographical Sketch of Emil Brunner[1]

Heinrich Emil Brunner, popularly known as Emil Brunner, was born December 23, 1889, in Winterthur,

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1. Books and articles from which pertinent facts about Brunner have been gathered are as follows: Emil Brunner, "Intellectual Autobiography of Emil Brunner," The Theology of Emil Brunner, ed. Charles W. Kegley (The Library of Living Theology, Vol. III; New York: The Macmillan Company, 1962), pp. 3-20; Emil Brunner, "A Spiritual Autobiography," The Japan Christian Quarterly (21, 1955, No. 3), pp. 238-244; "Brunner -- (Heinrich) Emil," The Encyclopedia Britanica, pub. William Benton, Vol. 4 (1964), p. 307; Edwin Robertson, "Brunner, the Great," The British Weekly, April 14, 1966, p. 6.

Switzerland, the son of Emil and Sophie Brunner. His German-speaking parents were staunch members of the Swiss Reformed Church, his mother being the daughter of a Reformed minister. During the course of his younger life, Emil came under both the direct and indirect influence of two spiritually dynamic pastors, Christoph Blumhardt and Hermann Kutter. The latter, who might be called the father of the modern dialectical movement in theology, had an especially profound effect upon the spiritual and intellectual development of his young admirer.

Following his early education in the Gymnasium in Zürich, Emil Brunner continued his studies in the University of this city, from which he received his doctorate in 1913. Other theological study and research had been undertaken previously (1911) at the University of Berlin. In 1913-1914, during his first stay in England, he learned the English language. The sojourn in England was cut short by the outbreak of the First World War and Brunner returned home to help man the defense line along the Swiss border. Later he became pastor of the mountain church, Obstalden in the Canton of Glarus, where in 1917 he was married to Margaret Lauterburg, a niece of Hermann Kutter. They had four children, two of whom died early in life.

Three years after undertaking the pastorate at Obstalden, and two years after his marriage, Brunner

received and accepted an invitation for a year's study at Union Theological Seminary, New York. He returned home to find that in his absence Karl Barth had "thrown a theological bomb" into Germany. A longstanding association with this towering personality and his "Barthianism" now began, though this was later marked by much real or professed disagreement. The theological and philosophical line developed by the group to which both theologians belonged was known variously, but in no case with exactness, as: the Theology of Crisis, the Dialectical Theology, Neo-Orthodoxy, and Barthian Theology.

In 1924 Brunner resigned from his Glaronese charge and took the chair of systematic and practical theology of the University of Zürich, which he occupied until 1955. Aside from theology, but not alien to it, there were two other spiritual factors that became important in the second half of his life: The Oxford Group movement and the I-thou philosophy of Ferdinand Ebner and Martin Buber. The Oxford Group, coming over from Britain in 1931 as a new type of revival movement, impressed the Swiss theologian with the close relation of spiritual reality to fellowship or communion. The "I-thou" concept of Ebner and Buber was a philosophical "spring" contributing to the development of that principle which was to become so regnant in Brunnerian theology: the principle of <u>Wahrheit als Begegnung</u>.

Brunner's theological thinking was dominated from the very start by a deep desire to be able to preach the gospel to those outside the Christian Church and to interpret it to the secular mind. Welcoming "encounters" with such minds, he became a distinguished lecturer at universities in Europe, Great Britain and the United States. He served during the academic year 1938-1939 as a visiting lecturer in theology at Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey, but chose to return to his old post at Zürich when the outbreak of the Second World War seemed imminent. In 1942 he became rector of the University of Zürich and continued so for two years. An invitation was extended to him in 1948 to deliver the Gifford Lectures in the University of St. Andrews, Fife, Scotland, -- these being later published in two volumes as Christianity and Civilisation.

In the ensuing years of 1949 and 1950, at the urgent call of Dr. John R. Mott, Brunner travelled extensively in the Far East as a theological adviser to the worldwide YMCA organization. On this prolonged tour he lectured in several countries, including Japan. Becoming deeply impressed by the spiritual needs and receptivity of the Japanese people, he gladly returned to their country in 1953 to become Professor of Christian Ethics and Philosophy at the new International Christian University in Tokyo,

where he remained through two academic sessions. Returning to his native land and city in 1956, he was forced to go into semi-retirement because of ill health. Through the next decade he continued with his writing, though at a reduced tempo. His death occurred at Zürich in Holy Week, April 6, 1966.

Emil Brunner had a truly brilliant career as a scholar and theologian. He was well known and influential throughout all of Christendom as a persuasive writer and lecturer, teacher and preacher. Never flagging in missionary interest and zeal, he had an abiding concern for what he called "die andere Aufgabe der Theologie." This task he conceived to be that of encouraging a favourable hearing for the gospel through "eristics," preferred to the traditional term of "apologetics" in that it is aggressive rather than defensive in character. Attesting to the spiritual and intellectual stature of this man are the honorary degrees in divinity which were bestowed upon him by the universities of Münster, Edinburgh, Utrecht, Oxford, Oslo, Princeton and St. Andrews. In addition, the University of Bern granted him an honorary Doctor of Laws degree. His numerous prominent students of the past decades and his scores of widely read books and articles evidence the important place that he held, and continues to hold, among the theologians of this century.

4. A Survey of Major Christological Issues in Christian History

Since this thesis is concerned with the doctrine of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ it seems advisable to make a rapid survey of the capital and classical issues in Christology as these have emerged in the history of Christian thought. The object of this exercise is two-fold: first, to project these issues into an immediate and, it is hoped, reasonably clear perspective, thereby identifying the Christological problems that twentieth century theology has inherited from the past; secondly, to provide the categories for dealing with the essential elements discovered in the Christological thought of Forsyth and Brunner.

Of central significance in the Christian faith is the doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ. It is the conviction of the writer that the basic components of this doctrine, namely: the true Deity, the real humanity, and the union of Deity and humanity in the one Person, are included in the Scriptural witness. With this conviction is the awareness that recent studies -- most importantly Eduard Schweizer's Jesus Christ in the Many-sided Witness of the New Testament[1] -- have pointed out once again the

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1. Eduard Schweizer, Jesus Christus im Vielfältigen Zeugnis des Neuen Testaments (München: Siebenstern Taschenbuch Verlag, 1968).

great variety of Scriptural testimonies to this fundamental Christian doctrine.

During His life on earth, widely divergent ideas of Christ were already in circulation. This is revealed in the answers given to the question asked in Caesarea Philippi: "Who do men say that the Son of man is?"[1] The reply indicates that one man discovers in Him John the Baptist, while another sees in Him Elijah or Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets. It is not surprising to find differences in the testimony of the Apostles as the more incisive query "Who do you say that I am?"[2] presses upon the early Church.

In the chapter that begins his Humanity and Divinity of Jesus Christ John Knox shows that within the New Testament there are three distinct types of Christology, sometimes standing alone and sometimes in a parallel relationship in the same writing.[3] In brief, these types may be labelled "Adoptionism," incipient "Kenoticism," and "Incarnationism." In the last type there is posed in acute form the problems that were to occupy and agitate the mind of the Church for several hundred years. This type of Christology, based on Johannine teaching, confronted the Church with the necessity of explicating two problems:

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1. Matthew 16:13 (RSV). 2. Matthew 16:15 (RSV).

3. John Knox, The Humanity and Divinity of Christ (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), pp. 1-18.

first, the relationship between the pre-existent Logos-Son and the Godhead; secondly, the relationship between the Divine and the human in Jesus Christ. In the movement of the Church to define and declare its basic faith over against heretical teaching, the explication of these two problems went hand in hand. As Grillmeier has well stated, "Church teaching had to develop trinitarian and Christological doctrine side by side if it was to maintain the divine Sonship of Jesus in any true sense."[1]

It is important to note that the essential Christological elements of the Divinity, the humanity and the unity of Jesus Christ were apprehended by the primitive Church not as intellectual problems but as issues of faith. In their daily lives and worship of God the earliest Christians proclaimed <u>that</u> Christ was the Son of God and the Son of man, but they did not inquire <u>how</u> this was true. However, in the ensuing years Christians as well as non-Christians raised inevitable questions as to how this could be.

Two opposing tendencies can be detected in early Christological thought. One of these is the tendency to "Docetism" in which the "pure" Divinity of Christ is guarded so zealously that His real humanity is denied.

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1. Aloys Grillmeier, <u>Christ in Christian Tradition</u> (London: A. R. Mobray & Co. Limited, 1965), p. 93.

Incarnationism, as Knox indicates, is always in danger of slipping over into this view. Although Docetism has no real support in Johannine writings, it was already being suggested as a solution to the Christological problem in the milieu in which they were written. The docetic view was espoused by various Gnostics of whom Marcion was a chief representative. Marcion could not tolerate the idea of a human birth or human growth for Jesus, but claimed that He came down from heaven as a saving spirit and assumed a phantom body in which He manifested the good God.

On the other hand, to the early Ebionites Christ was a mere man who was endued with power in his baptism to become a prophet. But Ebionism was too Judaistic in character and therefore limited in influence, so the true opposite of Docetism came to be "Adoptionism" which denied to Christ essential Deity.

Although the fundamental errors of Docetism and Adoptionism were soon refuted, they served as provocative forces to initiate doctrinal thought with respect to the Person of Christ. The tendencies they represented and set in motion found continued expression in the historical development of this critically important doctrine.

The development of an incarnational type of Christology requires, as has been pointed out, a defining of the relationship between the pre-existent Logos-Son and God the

Father. In the process of making this definition the Church, with profound insight, rejected every view which detracted from Christ's unity with God or which blurred the distinctness of His personality. Included in the rejections was Monarchianism in its two major forms, Dynamic and Modalistic.

The Dynamic Monarchians, though they did grant that Jesus was born of a virgin, laid great emphasis on His humanity and were thereby Ebionitic in their viewpoint. However, it is better to refer to their position as "Adoptionist" since their most able expositor, Paul of Samosata, thought of Jesus as having been "adopted" by God and endued with divine power in His baptism. On the other hand, the Modalistic Monarchians identified Christ, who had no pre-existence, with God by interpreting His person as one of the successive modes in which God as divine monos manifested Himself. Christ as a distinct personality fades from sight and the one God goes to the Cross for man's salvation (Patripassianism). Sabellius, the classic exponent of this kind of Monarchianism, believed that the unity of the Godhead unfolded itself in three successive modes in the course of the development of the world. These modes were : God the Father as Creator and Lawgiver, Christ the Son as Redeemer, and the Holy Spirit as Life-bringer and Sanctifier in the Church.

The heresy of Arianism, which stressed the distinct personality of Christ at the expense of His unity with God, was a powerful "negative" influence in moving the Church toward a firm statement of the Christ-God relationship. A. Harnack in his History of Dogma has enumerated the chief points set forth by Arius, the formulater of the heretical doctrine which bears his name. Among these points we find it affirmed that Christ, who is called in Scripture Wisdom, Word, Son, Image, etc., was created by God of an independent substance (οὐσία or ὑπόστασις) to be the maker of all things; that He is an intermediate creature between God and man, not unbegotten but "the only-begotten; and that, being endowed with free will as a rational being, He is capable of change (τρεπτός).[1]

Tertullian, in working out his concept of the relation of Christ to God, devised a trinitarian formula, but it was scarcely more than a bare affirmation of three-in-one. Christ "shared" in the una substantia as the Son who existed eternally immanent in the Father, as Creator with the Father, and as the revelation of God in the Incarnation -- a three-fold hypostatic existence.

Origen, supplementing the teaching of Tertullian,

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1. Adolf Harnack, History of Dogma, trans. E. B. Speirs and James Milar (London: Williams and Norgate, 1898), pp. 15-19.

identified the Logos with the Son and so brought together the Divinity of Christ and His distinct personality. On the one hand, Origen held that the Son proceeding from the Father by "eternal generation" encompassed the entire glory of God in Himself as His absolute Image, as absolute Wisdon, Truth and Reason. On the other hand, this keen-minded Alexandrian considered the Son as mutable in His person and as being morally subordinate to the Father, having a derived and dependent existence while the Father alone was eternally the self-subsisting ground of His being.

The Council of Nicaea, showing a plain aversion to the tenets of Arianism as well as to some of the views of Origen, offered the following solution to the problem of the Deity of Christ and His relationship to God:

> We believe in one God. . . . And in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, begotten from the Father, only-begotten, that is, from the substance of the Father. . . begotten not made, of one substance with the Father.[1]

The Council thus conceived of Christ as Son rather than Logos, as being homoousios with the Father, and concluded with the assertion that there never was a time when the Son was not. Nicaea also anathematized the Arian and Origenist view that Christ was morally mutable.

Athanasius -- whose doctrine of the Person of Christ,

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1. J. N. D. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1958), p. 232.

as will be seen, came to be so deeply appreciated by P. T. Forsyth -- did much to impress the Nicene position on the mind of the Church. To this vigorous opponent of Arianism should go much of the credit for replacing the emphasis on the Logos in Incarnationism with an emphasis on the Son. In his Christological thought Origen's subordination of the Son to the Father is replaced by the idea of the supreme condescension of the Son of God in becoming the Saviour of men. The work of Christ becomes the decisive clue to the secret of His person. Only a Christ as great as God Himself could effect the salvation of sinful men. The article of the Nicene Creed, "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven" is echoed in the writing of Athanasius. For him, Christ and His saving work are to be understood not in an intellectual frame of reference but in a moral context of grace. While Athanasius had imperfect ideas of the nature of salvation, as Sydney Cave has said: "His greatness lies, not in his interpretation of redemption, but in his concentration on redemption and his realisation of its implicates."[1]

Like Athanasius, the Cappadocian Fathers (Basil of Caesarea, Gregory of Nazianzus and Gregory of Nyssa) were

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1. Sydney Cave, The Doctrine of the Person of Christ (7th Imp.; London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd., 1962), p. 97.

in fundamental accord with the Christological position of Nicaea and helped to indoctrinate the Church with the views of the Council. Unlike Athanasius who began with the one divine essence and interpreted the hypostases in that light, these Fathers essayed the interpretation of the one divine essence in the person of Christ by beginning with the three hypostases and bringing them under the one divine ousia. For the Cappadocians each hypostasis had its particular attribute. Christ the Son was the generated hypostasis with the same divine substance and nature, the same dignity and glory, the same power and energy as the unbegotten God.

While some students of Christian doctrine have maintained that the Cappadocians were tritheists at heart and that their labours had the net result of interpreting Christ as one aspect of a three-fold and abstract divine essence, Maurice Wiles does not go along with this conclusion:

> For the Cappadocians as thoroughgoing Platonists the ousia that is common to all men is not an abstract concept but the most important thing that there is. It is this fact, so foreign to our way of thinking, that is determinative of their understanding of the divine ousia and which shows them to be essentially monotheistic in intention.[1]

The Cappadocian Fathers must indeed have tried diligently to put to sound Christological use the philosophical

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1. Maurice Wiles, The Making of Christian Doctrine (Cambridge: The University Press, 1967), p. 133.

language forced upon the Church in the controversy with Arius. This was a task that would tax their dedicated ingenuity and that of many "theological" successors to the utmost. It should also be stated that for all the earnest effort expended, the aim to define a fully coordinated Trinity was never achieved. "The most carefully articulated statement of the relation of ousia and hypostasis remains in the final analysis no less paradoxical than Gregory of Nazianzus' more direct declaration that the Trinity is 'separately one and unitedly separate'."[1] The nub of the problem was that the category of "substance" was not adequate as a synthesising agent for two great truths of revelation, namely: that God is one and that the Son is God.

A problem of equally great or even greater proportions was that posed by the question of Christ's humanity and its relationship to His Divinity. How could it be asserted that Jesus Christ as Divine was at the same time truly human and that Deity and humanity were perfectly united in the one Person? As has been indicated, Incarnationism in coming to grips with this problem is always in danger of becoming docetic. The struggle with Docetism was even more protracted than the conflict with Arianism which engaged the spiritual and intellectual energies of

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1. Wiles, The Making of Christian Doctrine, p. 139.

the Church over such a long period of time.

Assuming a number of different forms in the early centuries, docetic Christology culminated in its most seductive shape in the teaching of Apollinarius. On the current theory of two complete natures, it seemed hopeless to this thinker to maintain the oneness of Jesus' person. Seeking to preserve this unity, he denied to Christ a rational soul (νοῦς) in which freedom of choice has its locus. The Church vigorously rejected this curtailment of His human nature which left Jesus lacking in the very constituent of manhood which makes man to be man and capable of union with God at all: the very part of his nature in which man has sinned and needs to be redeemed.[1] But this heresy was remarkably persistent and would reappear even in twentieth century Christological thought.

After Apollinarianism had been condemned by the Council of Constantinople three principal views of the Person of Christ came to the forefront in theological debate. The first view, put forward by Nestorius, kept the Deity and the humanity of Christ in such strict separation that their unity was lost and, while his exemplary manhood

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1. Cf. G. L. Prestige, Fathers and Heretics (London: SPCK, 1940), p. 233: "Apollinarius left no scope for direct action of the Saviour on the souls of men."

was established in opposition to Docetism, His Saviourhood was given up. At the other extreme, the view of Eutyches emphasised the unity of the Person but in so doing sacrificed the plurality of Deity and humanity by having the former absorb the latter. The third view, of which Cyril of Alexandria was the originator, represented an attempt to use the category of "Nature" (φύσις) in such a way that all the life experiences of Jesus Christ could be considered theanthropic, not some human and some divine, but all of them both divine and human simultaneously. But Cyril's "school", seeking to avoid the error of Nestorius, pushed too far in the direction of Eutyches and Cyrillian teaching came under judgment by the Church.

Using the Christological metaphors "form of God" (forma Dei) and "form of a servant" (forma servi) drawn from Philippians 2:6,7, St. Augustine interpreted the "two natures" as self-evidently exclusive and apart. At the same time he insisted very plainly in the Enchiridion, that Christ was both God and man in the one person. However, in referring to the two "forms" as co-existent in Christ, in opposition to St. Paul who interpreted them as successive modes of His being, Augustine was inclined to be docetic in his viewpoint.

In a letter to the patriarch of Constantinople dealing with the errors of Eutyches, the Roman Bishop Leo

indited an epoch-making document in the history of Christology. The main points of Leo's Tome as these are given in A. B. Bruce's compendium are: the absolute identity of the God-man with the divine Word; the co-existence of the divine and human natures in one person without mixture or confusion; the natures as separate principles of operation, though always acting in concert with each other; and a "communication of idioms" postulated by the oneness of the person -- e.g. the Son of man coming down from heaven and the Son of God being crucified and buried.[1] While these assertions did not really solve any Christological problems they had the merit of "setting out the factors demanding recognition fairly and squarely."[2]

The high-water mark of the Christology of Incarnationism was reached in the conciliar decisions of Chalcedon which gave formal expression to much that had been suggested by Leo. Significant excerpts from the Chalcedonian Formula are as follows:

> . . . we . . . confess that our Lord Jesus Christ is truly God and truly man . . . consubstantial with the Father in Godhead, and the same consubstantial with us in manhood . . . one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, made known in two natures without confusion, without change, without division, without separation . . .[3]

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1. A. B. Bruce, The Humiliation of Christ (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1876), pp. 81-82.

2. Kelly, Early Christian Doctrines, p. 338.

3. Ibid., pp. 339-340.

The definitions thus expressed are in part positive and in part negative. The positive are limited to two points. First, the true Deity and the real humanity of Christ are affirmed. Here can be seen the net gain from the long battle with Arianism on the one hand and the longer resistance to Docetism on the other. Ruled out of the Church's faith is any Arian or Adoptionist view of Christ which identifies Him as a created being elevated to a divine status. Also ruled out is any view which conceives of His humanity as mere appearance or fantasy, as the cloak or outer covering of His essential Deity. The second positive affirmation of Chalcedon is that of the singleness of the Person of Christ: "one and the same Christ . . . made known in two natures." This pronouncement rejected any doctrine of a double Christ instead of the one incarnate Son of God. Such were the positive points in the Formula, surpassing in importance the negative adverbs by which the extremes of Nestorianism and Eutychianism were shut out.

Concrete Christological doctrine set forth at Chalcedon was obviously very limited in scope. No light was really thrown upon the basic problem: how to conceive of what relates to the Divine mode of life and what relates to the human mode of life as being united in the experience of a single Person. The conciliar Decision did

not lead the ancient Church a step nearer to any satisfactory idea of unity in the Incarnate Life. Deity and humanity were left in sheerly miraculous and inert conjunction. Failure at this point can be mainly attributed to the character of the conceptual tools at the disposal of the Council. These tools were static and abstract concepts and terms borrowed from Greek metaphysics. A trend toward this kind of borrowing was started at Nicaea when, in an attempt to secure the Divinity of the Second Person of the Godhead, the loan-word οὐσία was inserted in the Nicene symbol. At Chalcedon the famous adjective ὁμοούσιος was extended to the humanity of Christ as well as to His Deity. Moreover, a new and less happy synonym of οὐσία -- one calculated to attract to itself more "materialistic" connotations -- was introduced into the doctrinal definitions. This was the word φύσις (nature) employed in the infelicitous phrase ἐν δύο φύσεσιν . Underlying the descriptive categories of Chalcedon was the presupposition that the "two natures" are disparate and static substances. This being the case, it was quite impossible for the Council to make any progress toward the solution of the "unity" problem with respect to the Person of Jesus Christ.

Comment should be made upon the fact that the "balanced" Chalcedonian view of Christ as truly God and truly man derived in large measure from the way in which the two

rival exegetical schools of Alexandria and Antioch placed their respective emphases on the Divinity and humanity of Christ. Alexandrian thought, originating in a more rarefied intellectual atmosphere, tended to be "other worldly" rather than concerned with the affairs of ordinary life and subordinated the moral to the metaphysical. Hence the Alexandrian view of Christ strongly emphasized His Deity and was more or less docetic.

Antiochene thought, Aristotelian rather than Platonist in its philosophical orientation, was more down to earth and ethical. In theology ethical concern generally predominated over the evangelical. In their view of Christ the Antiochenes tended to put an excessive stress upon His humanity which came to expression in such forms as Adoptionism and Nestorianism. However, the Antiochene position helped restore to some extent at Chalcedon the Divine-human equipoise which did not obtain at Nicaea because of the dominating influence of Athanasius and the Alexandrians.

In a way the emphasis of the school of Antioch was adumbrated in the important anti-docetic teaching of St. Irenaeus. This early Church father -- to whom favourable reference is so frequently made in the writings of Emil Brunner -- brought the weight of his greatest effort to bear upon portraying the true manhood of Christ. In his

familiar "recapitulation theory" Irenaeus interpreted the genealogy of Luke, which traces Christ's birth back to Adam the son of God, as showing Him to be One who summed up in Himself all races and all generations of mankind. Central also to his thought is the figure of the historical Christ and the redemption wrought by Him. While much stress is laid upon the Incarnation as having redemptive value in itself, Irenaeus plainly indicates that there was a work to be performed by the Saviour of men which gave genuine soteriological significance to His earthly life. There is sound justification for Cullmann's estimate: "Down to theologians . . . in the nineteenth century . . . there has scarcely been another who has recognized so clearly as did Irenaeus that the Christian proclamation stands or falls with the redemptive history, that this historical work of Jesus Christ as Redeemer forms the mid-point of a line that leads from the Old Testament to the return of Christ."[1]

With respect to the atoning work of the God-man the Ransom or "Classic" Theory held by such early Church fathers as Irenaeus, Origen and Athanasius, embraced the view that, in order to fulfill the Divine purpose to ransom the souls of sinful men from bondage to Satan, Jesus Christ must be both God and man: man because He was to offer a ransom for

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1. Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time (London: S C M Press Ltd., 1951), pp. 56-57.

men; God, in order to triumph over Satan and his citadel. According to Irenaeus, "the earthly life of Jesus as a whole . . . was a continuous process of victorious conflict."[1] Yet it was in the final and decisive battle on the Cross that the ransom was fully paid and men delivered from Satan's thraldom.

In the theory of Anselm of Canterbury, man the sinner is a helpless and hopeless offender against the Divine honour and dignity. The penalty should be paid by man, but none but God could pay such a price. Either the sinner must be punished eternally or a substitute must be found who can satisfy the offended honour of the holy God. The character of this substitute must satisfy both the claims of God and the needs of man. Therefore, the Son of God became man in order that, on behalf of man, He might make the reparation which none but God could make.

The soteriological position marked out by Hugo Grotius in his Governmental Theory is not "how God could get reparation for a private injury, but that of safeguarding the interests of His moral government."[2] This view was developed in answer to the Socinians who held that

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1. Gustav Aulén, Christus Victor (London: SPCK, 1931), p. 46.

2. T. H. Hughes, The Atonement (London: George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1949), p. 38.

Christ was only a man whose death, by the arbitrary and inscrutable decree of God, is made effectual for the forgiveness of sins to all who so accept it. Grotius conceded that while God has the perfect right and power to forgive without punishing, Divine wisdom dictates that in bestowing forgiveness the moral law must also be secured against contempt. To do this God delivered over to death His innocent Son. In this way there was no compensation, substitution or satisfaction involved. There was only a manifestation determined by divine justice.

The essence of the Moral Influence Theory of Abelard, later adopted by Socinus, has been given by R. S. Franks: "It is the doctrine that Christ reconciles men to God by revealing the love of God in His life and still more in His death, so bringing them to trust and love Him in return."[1] At the core of this theory is the inspiration provided by the supremely good but entirely human person, Jesus Christ. Variations of the Moral Theory found a place in the teaching of Schleiermacher, Ritschl and modern theologians of liberal persuasion. In a typical phrase, Hastings Rashdall of the Liberal school echoes the sentiment of Abelard: "The death of Christ justifies us, inasmuch as through it charity is stirred up in our hearts."[2]

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1. R. S. Franks, The Atonement (London: Humphrey Milford, 1934), p. 2

2. Hastings Rashdall, The Idea of Atonement in Christian

Characteristic of this "subjective" theory in all its variations is the insistence that the Atonement essentially involves a change taking place in man rather than a changed attitude on the part of God.

The latter day Ethical Satisfaction Theory of the Atonement was an attempt to show that the suffering and death of Christ were an actual power unto salvation. Exponents of this theory have contended that Jesus Christ in the days of His flesh so fully realized the sins of men as His own that He could make a vicarious confession of sin on behalf of man,[1] or, in a variant view, offer to God a vicarious penitence.[2] The Atonement includes both the activity of the holy God in, through and beyond Jesus Christ and the response of the whole man who is sinful and in need of being reconciled to God and his fellow-men.

In dealing with the Work of Christ, most Christian thinkers have maintained the Chalcedonian view of the Divine-human Person. Apart from Abelardians and Socinians, the primary emphasis has always tended to fall upon the Divine nature of Him who is able "to save to the uttermost"

Theology (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1920), p. 438.

1. J. McLeod Campbell, The Nature of the Atonement (4th. ed; London: James Clarke & Co., 1959), pp. 129-150.

2. R. C. Moberly, Atonement and Personality (1st ed.; London: John Murray, 1904), pp. 117-133.

the race of sinful men. In Soteriology the Athanasian and Alexandrian conviction shines through that, if not sin itself, at least the effects of sin go down to the very inmost being of man. What is wrong with man can only be set right by the action of a truly Divine Power upon man's whole being. While this properly rules out any Adoptionist Christology, any Antiochene over-emphasis on the humanity of Christ, there is neglect of the complementary truth that in Christ we have One who was really touched with the feeling of our human infirmities. Such has been the pattern of thought with respect to the Person and Work of Christ all through the long dominance of the Two-nature Doctrine. Christ's Deity is conceived as loosely attached to His human nature, yet overbearing it, and almost reducing to unreality the moral struggles, conflicts and victories of His earthly career.

The effort to cope with the problem of unity presented by the Two-nature Doctrine of the Divine-human Christ was not resumed until the Reformation. Related to this effort in Luther's Christological thought is the modern development of Kenoticism which, as stated earlier in this section, is a third type of New Testament Christology along with primitive Adoptionism and Incarnationism.

The Scriptural locus classicus of kenotic theory is Philippians 2:5-11 where the divine pre-existent Christ is

pictured as entering the human realm for its redemption through an act of kenosis or self-emptying. Although, by scholarly consensus, the Philippian passage has been found inadequate to support a Christology of Kenoticism, in a real sense the whole New Testament reveals a kenotic motif. For, as D. G. Dawe has cogently declared:

> It is simply necessary to place in juxtaposition the many references to Christ's pre-existent glory as a sharer in the divine life, and all the references to His humiliation, limitations, suffering and death in the earthly ministry. Then it can be argued that the only way in which these two opposite states of existence can be predicated of the same person is by some process of divine self-limitation.[1]

In the early Church "Kenotic" Christology held promise of explaining in some intelligible way the relationship of two contrasting elements of Christian faith. The contrast between two modes of existence which faith must attribute to the same Person raised a profound question. How can One who shares truly in the life of God also share in the real life of humanity? The answer attempted poetically and cryptically in Philippians II was that God in some sense had limited Himself in His person or being to live a human life. This was a genuine Christological insight with fruitful possibilities. However, the Church soon entered upon an era which affected quite negatively

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1. D. G. Dawe, The Form of a Servant (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1963), p. 28.

the development of these possibilities.

Specifically, the conflict with Arianism precluded for many centuries any chance of developing a Kenotic Christology. In the bitter struggle to maintain the true Divinity of the Son of God against the Arian contention that He was created and mutable (τρεπτός), the Church relinquished the Biblical concept of God as personal and dynamic being and substituted the Greek metaphysical category of static and unchangeable substance. Since it was vehemently asserted that Christ was fully divine, the attribute of absolute unchangeableness was ascribed to Him also. Furthermore, the Arian controversy also "fixed" the exegesis of the Philippian passage. Although a number of Greek and Latin fathers alluded from time to time to the Kenosis text, as P. Henry has commented in his excellent disquisition:

> Nearly always their exegesis is characterised by the two following marks: First, the subject of the passage is the pre-existent Christ and the main if not exclusive object of the kenosis is the act of incarnation itself; secondly, Christ did not exchange one "form" in order to take another in its place, there was no essential metamorphosis, but at the most, according to some, a change of appearance.[1]

The phrase "He emptied Himself" simply meant a veiling or

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1. P. Henry, "Kénose," Supplément au Dictionaire de la Bible, ed. L. Pirot and others (Tome Cinquième: Paris: Librairie Letouzey et Ané, 1957), col. 56. Translation mine. The scholarly discussion of "Kenosis" by Henry is so thorough that it might almost be termed "exhaustive."

obscuring of the divine glory while Jesus was on earth.[1] By such dogmatic affirmations a pattern of "orthodox" exegesis was established by the anti-Arian fathers. The developments of the patristic age reaching a climax at Chalcedon closed the door on any creative use of kenosis for a long time to come.

With the Reformation came the doctrine of Justification by Faith in Christ and with it Luther's idea of a close bond between the trusting soul and the Incarnate Saviour. From this idea the Reformer went on to infer a parallel union of the Divine and the human by which a parallel exchange of properties takes place -- i.e. a communicatio idiomatum. However, Luther's attempt to improve upon the disunity in the Chalcedonian Formula miscarried when the communicatio idiomatum came to be mainly championed in the interest of sacramental multipresence.

The critical historical investigation to which the Gospels were subjected in the modern scientific age dimmed the divine "aura" which had long surrounded the record of the life of Jesus. On the other hand, it brought to light as never seen before the human lineaments of the central Figure. The old question is posed with new sharpness: How

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1. Cf. Calvin, Institutes of the Christian Religion (trans. F. L. Battles; London: S.C.M. Press, 1961), Vol. I, p. 476: "For a time the divine glory did not shine, but only human likeness was manifested in a lowly and abased condition."

is it possible that this Person who finally appears to be so genuinely human -- a true "earthling", so to speak -- could all the while in the days of His flesh be living, either consciously or unconsciously, the life of Deity? Endeavouring to answer this question kenotic theorizers of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, boldly moving against the barrier of a philosophical substructure for the doctrine of God, have declared that, on the basis of a kenosis involving a drastic but fitting act of accommodation, it is possible to conceive in some intelligible way of the Divine as being truly united with the human in the one Person of Jesus Christ. Whereas Luther, the "Father" of Kenoticism, thought of the Divine attributes as having been first communicated to Christ's humanity and then stripped away -- a view which gives no real help toward understanding the life of Jesus among men -- modern theorists conceived of the Kenosis as applying to His very Deity itself.

Thus, the significant distinction between Chalcedonian and Kenotic Christology becomes quite evident. While the Two-nature Doctrine speaks of a completely Divine and a fully human "nature" in the one Person, the kenotic motif speaks of the self-emptying or diminution of the Divine Being so there could be a truly human life. And while the Two-nature Doctrine posits the co-existence

of the human and Divine in one Person, the basic picture in Kenoticism is that Christ foregoes the Divine Being in some way to become man. Theologically Kenotic Theory has justified itself by holding that such a stupendous self-sacrifice on the part of the Second Person in the Godhead means a subordination of less vital attributes and activities of the Divine Being to the one supreme end of holy love; it is the triumph of the moral in God over the physical.

This brief survey of historical issues relating to the Person and Work of Jesus Christ has, it is believed, served to achieve the limited objectives set forth at the beginning of this section and thus lead into the exposition, first of the Christological thought of P. T. Forsyth and secondly that of Emil Brunner.

CHAPTER II

THE CHRISTOLOGICAL THOUGHT OF PETER TAYLOR FORSYTH

1. Theological Perspective, Presuppositions and Methodology

Peter Taylor Forsyth's most important Christological thinking and writing were carried on at a time when the belated impact of the liberal viewpoint, which had dominated German theology for a hundred years, was producing an effect in Britain which took the form of the so-called "New Theology."[1] A few excerpts from a definitive statement issued to the secular press in 1907 by R. J. Campbell, a recognized "New Theology" spokesman, serve to show the theological and philosophical "colouration" of this movement:

> The starting point of the New Theology is belief in the immanence of God, and the essential oneness of God and man. . . . Every man is a potential Christ, or rather a manifestation of the eternal Christ, that side of the nature of God from which all humanity has come forth. . . . The New Theology looks upon evil as a negative rather

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1. A description of the "Theology" and the controversy it provoked, which deeply involved Forsyth, is ably set forth by Robert McAfee Brown in P. T. Forsyth: Prophet for Today, pp. 26-30.

> than a positive term. . . . Sin is simply selfishness. It is an offense against the God within. We believe that Jesus is and was divine, but so are we. His mission was to make us realize our divinity and our oneness with God.[1]

Toward such viewpoints Forsyth was in diametric opposition. His counter views, reflecting major facets of his own theological thought, were vigorously presented in an essay entitled "Immanence and Incarnation," appearing in The Old Faith and the New Theology.[2] From a starting line of immanence the "New Theology" could never probe the depths of the tragic human situation as he saw it. The sense of guilt was thereby discouraged and the miracle of saving grace was denied. Man becomes his own Saviour, needing no divine invasion from beyond his own being. And as for Jesus Christ, in a theology of immanence "the eternal ideal Christ is a divine principle quite separable from its classic instance -- the personality of the historic Jesus."[3] Furthermore, it "speculates about a Christ made flesh but it never grasps the true seat of Incarnation -- a Christ made sin."[4] It is never enough, Forsyth feels,

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1. R. J. Campbell, "The New Theology," The British Weekly, January 17, 1907, p. 414. Part of a citation from an earlier issue of The London Daily Mail.

2. P. T. Forsyth, "Immanence and Incarnation," The Old Faith and the New Theology, C. H. Vine, ed. (Samuel Low, Marston and Company: London), 1907, pp. 47-61.

3. Ibid., p. 57.

4. Ibid., p. 48.

to emphasize the Incarnation to the neglect of the Atonement, which was being done all too generally in his day even in "orthodox" circles far removed from the influence of any "New Theology." And this champion of evangelical faith is ready to challenge all enunciators and interpreters of Christian doctrine with the forthright declaration: "Christianity [which] is a theological religion or nothing . . . centres in the person of Christ rather than in the Christian principle and is the religion of His atoning Incarnation."[1]

Living in an era of scientific theology, a time when New Testament criticism was popular, Forsyth was not inclined to disparage the movement but to approve it wholeheartedly. "The service rendered to Christianity by the great critical movement is almost beyond words."[2] J. K. Mozley is astute in his observation that a way was thus furnished his fellow theologian for "the erection of

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1. P. T. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1911), p. xv.

2. Ibid., p. viii. Cf. Ibid., p. 49: "Much that is of permanent value has been done by the religious-historical school. Criticism is our friend and not our enemy in its place. It is a good servant but a deadly master. It becomes our enemy only when it aspires from being an organ of Evangelical faith to be its controller."

a dogmatic edifice in which the component materials could be selected according to their real strength."[1] However, Forsyth objected to the usual doctrinal interpretation of the phrase, "The Fatherhood of God," which came to the fore in this period. The expression was often used glibly and in a manner bespeaking an easy access to the presence of an indulgent God by ways other than faith. In his opinion ideas of this nature were given forceful impetus by such works as the liberal Adolf Harnack's Das Wesen des Christentums, in which the idea of a "simple gospel" of the Divine Fatherhood was promoted -- but could not be Biblically sustained. "The leading doctrine of much modern theology is the Fatherhood of God . . . which [offers us] a God genial, benignant, patient, and too great in His love to make so much as Paulinism does of the sin of a mere child like man."[2]

Along with the acceptance of the principle of higher criticism, Forsyth asserts that the development of sound doctrine is "a triumph of faith, working in its grasp of moral realities and steadying itself by its still

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1. J. K. Mozley, "The Theology of Dr. Forsyth," The Expositor, W. R. Nicoll, ed., Vol. XXIII (February, 1922), p. 82. Canon Mozley was a great admirer of Forsyth and makes frequent reference to him in his writings.

2. P. T. Forsyth, Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind (London: Independent Press Ltd., 1953), p. 232.

stronger grasp of Christ."[1] The indelible characteristic of sound theology is that it is thoroughly Christocentric, with the Person and Work of Jesus Christ providing the unshakable foundation for the discipline. It becomes apparent in the very early pages of The Person and Place of Jesus Christ that the author intends to introduce his readers to a "high" Christology:

> Faith in Christ involves the Godhead of Christ. Faith in Christ in the positive Christian sense, means much more than a relation to God in which Christ supremely helps us. It is a communion possible not through but in Christ and Him crucified. It means that to be in Christ is to be in God.[2]

From this definitive position Forsyth points out what he regards as a deadly weakness in the "new religious-historical school of Germany", represented for him by such contemporary writers as Wilhelm Bousset, Johannes Weiss and Paul Wernle, who, in applying the evolutionary principle to the history of religion, adopt a relativistic way of thinking "which takes from Christ His absolute value and final place" in divine revelation and which is "sympathetic with a Christ it does not worship, and praises

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1. Mozley, "The Theology of Dr. Forsyth", op. cit., p. 83.

2. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 6. Since this chapter is devoted to the thought of Forsyth, hereafter in this part of the thesis his name will be designated in footnotes simply by the initial F.

a Christ to whom it does not pray."[1] The net result of the alleged findings of this school is to represent Jesus as the subject of faith rather than the object of faith, calling men to believe not *in* Jesus but *like* Jesus.

Forsyth's strong objection to a rationalistic type of theology sets him over against the views of yet another great German thinker, G. W. F. Hegel.[2] Almost every reference to Hegel -- of which there are many -- reveals his combative spirit toward the rationalistic tendencies of this philosopher. Against these tendencies, finding wide expression in England through the medium of the New Theology, Forsyth is vigorously on the offensive. Actually it is a case of a real theology versus a kind of theosophical way of thinking. "In a theosophy (like Hegel's system) what we use is the intuition of thought by thought, in theology it is the intuition of a person by faith."[3]

The need to develop a solid counter-position to

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1. F., *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*, pp. 10-11.

2. Forsyth was an avid reader of Hegel and in his Lyman Beecher lectures he says reminiscently: "I immersed myself in the Logic of Hegel, and corrected it by the theology of Paul, and its continuity in the Reformation" (*Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind*, p. 195).

3. F., *The Principle of Authority* (London: Independent Press Ltd., 1952), p. 213.

rationalism -- not limited, incidentally, to that of Hegelian metaphysics -- undoubtedly had much to do with turning Forsyth toward a voluntaristic theory of knowledge in his theologizing. This voluntarism, however, is not of the later pragmatic type but bears much similarity to that of the Kantian school. In fact, the generally beneficent shadow of Immanuel Kant falls athwart the pages of much of P. T. Forsyth's major work.[1] No close or extensive reading is required to detect this significant influence. It is intimated, for instance, in a laudatory observation made by Forsyth in his magnum opus: "It would mean worlds for our Christian faith, which brought such an inversion of moral values, if the ethic of Kant and its developments

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1. J. H. Rodgers in The Theology of P. T. Forsyth makes the comment, "One of the most serious short-comings of the existing studies on Forsyth's thought is the lack of a sustained discussion of Forsyth's relation to Kantian, neo-Kantian, and Ritschlian thought. Such material is of the greatest help in understanding Forsyth" (p. 177). Rodgers, however, does not undertake to correct this deficiency. R. M. Brown, P. T. Forsyth: Prophet for Today, simply observes that "Among the philosophers, Kant exercised the deepest influence on Forsyth who often referred to him as 'the philosopher of Protestantism'" (p. 31); while W. L. Bradley, P. T. Forsyth - the Man and His Work, and G. O. Griffith, The Theology of P. T. Forsyth (London: Lutterworth Press, 1948), make only incidental reference to Kantian influence.

came to receive as much attention as the universities have given to the pagan ethic of Aristotle."[1] Up to a certain point a real bond of intellectual and spiritual kinship is possible between the two thinkers. The heart of the British theologian warmed toward the Prussian philosopher who turned his back on an Egypt of fettering Orthodoxy and Rationalism, climbed the height of a moral Sinai -- though, regrettably, having no personal communion there with the supreme Lawgiver -- and who at least faced in the direction of a Promised Land of more productive thought.

> The day of orthodoxy went by, and with it the night of Rationalism. With Kant came a new order of things. The ethical took the place that had been held by the intellectual. The notion of reality replaced that of truth. Religion placed us not in line with the rationality in the world but in rapport with the reality of it. And the ethical was the real.
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> As Kant handled the principle, it was much hampered by the circumstances of his day, but his route was right.[2]

While Forsyth readily acknowledges his indebtedness to Kant and to the Neo-Kantians in rebutting the claim of Rationalism to be the sole guide to truth and in their separation of the speculative and the practical reason, he stands opposed to the Kantian teaching which seems to imply

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 312.
2. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 4.

that religion is merely a department or adjunct of morality and he has some words by way of correction:

> It is true that religion belongs neither to the rational, the aesthetic, nor the ethical side of the soul exclusively. It draws on the whole soul's being and energy. But the Christian religion at least involves, if not the solitude, at least the primacy of the ethical. If Reality is to reach us it must be thus.[1]

These words emphasize the point of view that Forsyth steadily maintains throughout all his theological works, that religion is ever wider than morality, though morality is an indispensable element in religion. Indeed it is the supreme importance of the ethical for any true conception of Ultimate Reality that binds him to the Kantian school.

There is an Ultimate "Reality" (God) who, as personal Being, does "reach" through to man from beyond man in dynamic and decisive revelation. These are facts of the Faith sounded on the Forsythian trumpet with no uncertain note.

> The last moral reality is a person, not in repose but in action with the world. The real God is present in the soul, active in history, and master of the world. . . . God's way of carrying home His love to the world was by a person who was realized in one act corresponding to the unity of the person and the scale of the world.[2]

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1. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 4.

2. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 237.

In this connection, Forsyth is skeptical of existing forms of thought and of rational ideas in abstraction from concrete historical experiences.

> Certainty . . . is at bottom no matter of intellect alone, nor of thought; it cannot be there without an act of will, an act of appropriation by the personality. A process of thought apart from an act of will . . . would be but a mental panorama, a cinematogram played to a house of one.[1]

Facing up to the problem of subjectivism, Forsyth says that Christian certainty comes through revelation or invasive authority experienced by redeemed man. According as man responds in faith to the divine revelation and appropriates it he is lifted to new levels of living. Revelation, which is "defined as the free, final and effective act of God's self-communication in Jesus Christ for man's redemption"[2] and is declared to "take affect in us, not as an act of insight, but only as an experience of being redeemed","[3] must be an act and experience of a personal God in and through the personal Christ to a redeemed and renewed person among persons.

According to Forsyth, "All Christology must rest on

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1. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 100.

2. F., "Revelation and the Person of Christ," Faith and Criticism, (E. P. Dutton & Company, Inc., New York, 1893), p. 116.

3. Ibidem.

a moral salvation, spiritually and personally realized."[1] In order to understand his interpretation of the subjective and experiential elements in the Revelation of God in Jesus Christ to man, it should be seen in relation to that of the influential Albrecht Ritschl.[2] In Ritschlian teaching Jesus Christ is the historical revelation of God, the Revelation which faith experiences and to which it witnesses. Revelation is both experiential and subjective. This is evident in Ritschl's interpretation of the God-consciousness of Christ as consisting of an experience which He had and which He communicates to His followers. It is in this way that God's grace in Christ becomes effectual for man, and this is what the Gospel record means in its assertion that God revealed Himself in Christ to man. Although Forsyth does not agree with the content of this view of Ritschl, he does agree with the proper place it gives to the experiential and subjective

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 332.

2. Just how intensive this influence was is indicated by Forsyth in an autobiographical reference to a turning point in his spiritual pilgrimage: "I withdrew my prime attention from much of the scholar's work and gave it to those theological interests, imbibed first from Maurice, and then more mightily from Ritschl, which come nearer to life than science, sentiment, or ethic ever can do" (Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 195).

elements in the Revelation of God in Christ, elements that are essential for Christian faith. In this respect Ritschlian doctrine was a decided improvement over the radical subjectivism of Schleiermacher:

> The [movement] which arose out of Schleiermacher to correct Schleiermacher, the movement associated with the principle of Ritschl . . . is the movement to an objective Gospel carrying a theology which does not arise in experience but only makes its appeal to experience.[1]

Forsyth thinks of Ritschl as taking two definite forward steps from the position of Schleiermacher:

> Ritschl moved at least two steps forward. . . . He said faith was an act of judgment -- a judgment of our whole man on a certain fact's value; its effect and worth for us, and not on its mere existence. And he said further that it was an act of obedience, of total submission corresponding to the absolute nature of the Gospel fact and its demand.[2]

The emphasis in Ritschlianism on the place of value judgments in Christ's work of Revelation is heartily approved by Forsyth. Reformation doctrines can truly be interpreted in this way. These doctrines were formulated as a result of the Reformers' experience of Christ and the realization of His value for their lives of faith.

Forsyth adds to the thought of Ritschl by asserting

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1. F., "The Place of Spiritual Experience in the Making of Theology," The Christian World Pulpit, March 21, 1906, p. 185.

2. Ibidem.

that man cannot believe that Christ can have value as the revelation of holy God unless God creates the belief itself in him.

> My experience of Him is that of one who does a vital revolutionary work . . . that I could not bring to pass by any resources of my own. . . . And any faith I have at all is faith in Christ not merely as its content nor merely as its point of origin, but as its creator. . . . The great change . . . was a revolution effected in me and by Him.[1]

Faith then is renewed man's God-given response which receives revelation.

> It is the gift and creation of God. . . . Revelation would be impossible . . . were it not also, in the same act, Redemption and Regeneration. . . . It is no more possible for the natural man to believe what God has done in Christ than to do it.[2]

Forsyth believes that in Christ man's faith becomes an instrument of real knowledge, which relates not to an object but to a Subject who takes the initiative with man. In support of his view he cites the words of St. Paul who said: "But know that you have come to know God or rather to be known" (Galatians 4:9 KJV).

It is in the region of the will and conscience that Forsyth locates the meeting-place between God and man. This is the locale of the divine-human encounter. It is

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 198-199.

2. F., The Principle of Authority. p. 27.

the prius in the soul of man to which the Revelation of God in Jesus Christ makes its appeal.

> There is such a thing . . . as a religious a priori in us, though it is not an authority but the power to own authority. It is not a passivity but a receptivity, a loyalty, an obedience. Revelation does not come to us as if we were blank paper, dead matter or blind forces. It finds something to appeal to, to stir, to evoke. But this prius resides in the will and its power, not in the reason and its truth.[1]

Furthermore, the presence of this prius in no way compromises the "Protestant position . . . that we contribute nothing; that our salvation is wholly and solely of God's grace, with which we are placed in direct contact, and are sure at first hand; that it is quite undeserved by us, and of God's side absolutely free."[2] There cannot be any "ignoring the fact that both faith and repentance and all Christian experiences are supernatural things, are the gift of God."[3] If the case were otherwise, Forsyth would

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1. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 174. Elsewhere Forsyth warns against a careless use of "appeal" in connection with the approach that Revelation makes to man: "The word 'appeal' must . . . be used with care. It implies one of two things, a surface that responds or a court that allows. And for revelation, human nature is the former and not the latter. It is not a permit, but an obedient response" (F., "The Word and the World," The British Weekly, February 10, 1910, p. 534).

2. Ibid., p. 350.

3. F., "The Place of Spiritual Experience in the Making of Theology," op. cit., p. 184.

be flirting with the Pelagianism that is to be found in Roman Catholic theology and he has no intention of doing this. If a man is saved, it is God alone who does the saving and to God alone is due the glory and the honour.

Forsyth rarely discourses for long on any theological theme without making some reference to "conscience" and in his Christological discussions these references come thick and fast. This is not surprising when it is remembered that the motto of his great work, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, is: "Morality is the nature of things." The famous dictum of Joseph Butler is true because conscience is universal in human experience, as Forsyth sees the matter: "Conscience is the most universal thing, the most missionary thing of all. It is what makes man man and makes him one and makes him eternal."[1] Conscience, when analyzed, admits of no merely human explanation, for while it is within man at the same time it is outside of man. In stating the case for the "inwardness" of conscience Forsyth appeals to common experience:

> I would bear you back upon your own conscience and bid you listen to its voice. . . . There is in the soul a bar, a tribunal; our thoughts and actions are ranged before it; judgment is passed there upon

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1. P. T. Forsyth, Missions in State and Church (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), p. 18. Cf., F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 351: "The essence of Humanity is conscience."

> what we have been and done. Every one who believes in morality believes in the conscience as the power we have of passing moral judgment upon ourselves.[1]

And yet this "moral partner", this "judge that follows us like our shadow" is not of human choice or appointment, and Forsyth says: "The place which we cannot help assigning to conscience (whether we admit it or not) is a place given it by another power than ourselves. . . . And for such a moral being . . . we have but one name -- God."[2] But the theological significance of "conscience" has still not been fully explored, "for there is no possibility of going to the bottom of the matter and leaving out Jesus Christ."[3] Rather than leaving Him out, it must be said of Him: "Christ was and is the conscience of mankind and of God."[4] In coming to know Him as the "Conscience within the conscience"[5] man is enabled to meet the demands of a moral universe with which he is in conflict because of his sinfulness.

To Forsyth's way of thinking, knowledge is awareness

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1. P. T. Forsyth, The Cruciality of the Cross (London: Independent Press Ltd., 1948), pp. 62-63. The language of Forsyth in these and following pages is in many places strikingly similar to words and phrases used by Kant in his note on "Conscience" in The Critique of Practical Reason (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1879), pp. 290-292.

2. Ibid., pp. 64-65. 3. Ibid., p. 65. 4. Ibidem.

5. P. T. Forsyth, God the Holy Father (London: Independent Press Ltd., 1957), p. 96.

of the real, of the authoritative Absolute. In the act and state of Redemption man becomes aware and certain of this Absolute.

> The final authority for all life . . . must be a religious authority. The absolute Lord of Life must be found in life as religious, in personal communion with a personal God . . . but religion to our modern soul has two features. As ethical it must be essentially an act, . . . and as psychological it must be an experience. And to these subjective features of religion must correspond its object. That must be a person putting Himself into an act for an experience. Our relation, as living persons, to an influence or an idea is not religious. The final authority must therefore be . . . a communing person. . . . It can be neither a statement, nor a symbol . . . nor the Church. For a humanity with a history it must be the Christ of the historic and redeeming Cross.[1]

Forsyth believes that the authoritative Absolute which is revealed to man in his faith-experience is the very soul of his faith. "The person and work of Christ alone gives the moral soul to itself."[2] Christ gives to the soul (will and conscience included) an eternal place by establishing its communion with the righteous God. In this communion with God through Christ, man becomes aware that the real (the holy God in Christ) is both ethical and redemptive. This makes possible for him a "new relation by

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1. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 63.

2. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 251.

a new creation" and gives him moral insight and responsibility.

Forsyth acknowledges that philosophical speculation can bring man into contact with the authoritative Absolute but he denies that philosophy is able to provide this Absolute. And whereas philosophy succeeds only relatively, the revelation of God in Jesus Christ brings man finally and completely into contact with the ultimately Real and Authoritative. It is the contention of Forsyth that the work of Christ takes men out of the realm of the propositional truths of philosophy and into the realm of Revelation which is "not God's gift of truth, but of Himself."[1] But there is also no authority for mere theological knowledge or statements, and Forsyth declares:

> There are doctrines of salvation, but no saving doctrines. In a strict use of words, there is no such thing as saving truth. . . . Our supreme good is not knowledge, not correct doctrine. . . . It is the practical obedience and penitent response of faith in the historic grace of Christ to the conscience.[2]

Such a statement strikes a blow at the intellectualizing of revelation wherever it may occur. Forsyth does not hesitate to hammer home the evangelical truth which for

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1. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 155.

2. Ibid., p. 399.

him is of surpassing importance:

> God in Christ is the maker of His own revelation. It was God Himself that came to us in Christ; it was nothing about God, even about His eternal essence or His excellent glory. It is God that is our salvation, and not the truth about God. And what Christ came to do was not to convince us even that God is love, but to be with us and in us as the loving God forever and ever. He came not to preach the living God but to be God our life; yes, not to preach even the loving God but to be the love that God forever is.[1]

It can hardly be over-emphasized that the concept of the interpersonal character of Revelation is evident in Forsythian Christological thought from beginning to end. There can be no Revelation unless there is someone to receive the self-disclosure of God. Likewise man cannot possibly know God except through the divine self-revealing. And this self-revealing is thoroughly vital and dynamic. God in Jesus Christ acts, comes, gives Himself on behalf of sinful and impotent man. This Revelation is personal, experiential and sacramental, for "the absoluteness of Christianity lies in an experience of the historic and most human Christ as a superhuman visitant, and as the one moral mediator of personal

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1. The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 354. Cf. Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, pp. 10-11; P. T. Forsyth, The Soul of Prayer (London: Independent Press, 1949), p. 37; P. T. Forsyth, "Revelation and the Person of Christ," Faith and Criticism (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc., 1893), pp. 119-120.

communion with the living, and holy, and eternal God."[1] It is the new creation of man effected by Christ.

While P. T. Forsyth is not to be considered a Biblical theologian in the strict sense of the term, this is not to say that Scriptural undergirding is ever lacking in anything he wrote.[2] One does not follow far on the track of his thought without catching sight of some Biblical allusion and having borne in upon him the awareness of a solid substratum of the truth of the Scriptures. This is especially true of his magnum opus. Not only are there references, both explicit and implicit, to the

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 251.

2. S. J. Mikolaski in an article on "The Theology of P. T. Forsyth," The Evangelical Quarterly, (January-March, 1964), says that Forsyth "did not write as a biblical theologian" (p. 36). However, this comment by Mikolaski needs tempering. It would have been better to say that Forsyth did not write as an "exegetical" theologian after the manner, for instance, of Oscar Cullmann or Karl Barth, or to say that he was chary of so-called "proof" texts and believed that "revelation is distilled from the Bible rather than dissected" (F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 93). An excellent discussion of Forsyth's relation to the Bible is to be found in the Presidential Lecture given by Professor A. M. Hunter to St. Mary's Theological Society, St. Andrews, 3rd November, 1961. In this lecture, "P. T. Forsyth Neutestamentler" (q.v. The Expository Times, Vol. 73, pp. 100-106), Professor Hunter sees his fellow Aberdonian as one who thoroughly complied with his own forthright counsel given in Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind: "No man should ask for a public hearing on a theological question unless he has mastered his New Testament at first hand" (p. 70).

Philippian passage which serves as a somewhat concealed scaffolding for the last three chapters of the book, but many other New Testament texts are cited -- the "mini-Johannine Gospel" of Matthew xi. 27 is a favorite -- as well as Isaiah 53. The guiding principle of selection used, not only in The Person and Place but everywhere in Forsyth's theological works is, naturally, that of Christological significance and association. Under the guidance and stimulus of this principle the thought of the Christologist gravitates toward the Apostle Paul "as the supreme devotee, organ and expositor of Christ."[1] And, as every serious student of Forsyth would be led to expect, it is the soteriological insight of the Apostle that is the secret of his magnetism. "Paul was specially and divinely illuminated as the interpreter of Christ's act."[2] Yet this high estimate does not imply that Paul

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1. The British Weekly, October 31, 1907, p. 83. A quotation from a reply to James Denny anent a request for a statement of the theses underlying Positive Preaching and The Modern Mind. Cf. F., "The Evangelical Churches and the Higher Criticism," The Contemporary Review, (October, 1905), pp. 574-599. This is a strong article, replete with Christological implications, from which several citations will be taken. It, along with some other significant contributions to magazines and newspapers, belongs to the "formative" period which preceded The Person and Place. The particular reference here is to "the large Pauline version of Christ" (p. 582).

2. F., Theology In Church and State, p. 41. Cf. p. 31: "We hear [in Paul's Epistles] the man who had Christ's own interpretation of His work."

is ever to be pitted against Christ or that the Epistles are ever to be set over against the Gospels. Such an idea is entirely untenable.

> We must not sharply contrast Paul and Christ. . . . All we possess is the evangelical Christ common to Paul, the other apostles, and the first Church. We can compare the Epistles and the Gospels. Their view point is the same -- the Gospel. They ply the same Christ the Saviour. But the service of the evangelists is supplementary to that of Paul. They sustain the Gospel he preaches.[1]

Though he cannot go along with the doctrine of verbal inspiration Forsyth carefully shields himself from any possible charge that this is a casual or flippant rejection. "The true minister ought to find the words and phrases of the Bible so full of spiritual food and felicity that he has some difficulty in not believing in verbal inspiration. The Bible is the one enchiridion of the preacher still . . ."[2] Yet it is not the Bible per se which should be revered and cherished. To do so would be sheer Bibliolatry, the fatal error of the hyper-orthodox. The Scriptures are of secondary value to the holy intent of their inspiration, and there must be no misunderstanding of this intent. The Bible exists for

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1. F., "The Evangelical Churches and the Higher Criticism," op. cit., p. 584.

2. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 26.

the sake of the Gospel, this "Gospel" actually meaning two things: "It means the mighty saving act of God in Christ; and it means the news of that act by the word of apostolic men."[1] But primarily "it means God's Word to man, not spoken but done by a Saviour who spoke very little of it."[2] It could be said simply and truly that Christ Himself is the Gospel which is the raison d'être of the Bible, but such a succinct statement needs a safeguarding proviso:

> Of course you may say that Christ is God's Gospel . . . and that is quite right as long as we are not speaking of the Jesus of biography, of Jesus as a personal influence merely, but of the Christ of great history, the Messiah of redemption; so long as we are not speaking of the teaching and character of Christ only but of His work, which was the crisis of His person; so long as we live and move in Christ the Redeemer; so long as we do not begin with the Incarnation but end there; so long as we begin with the Redemption, Atonement, Reconciliation, and go on to end with such an Incarnation as is demanded for the purposes of that gracious Gospel and that saving God.[3]

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1. F., "The Evangelical Churches and the Higher Criticism," op. cit., p. 593.

2. Ibidem. Forsyth has some difficulty in relating the "Word" to the Bible. He goes on to say: "It is not the Bible that contains God's Word so much as God's Word that contains the Bible." This would seem to make him reluctant to settle for the Christ-manger metaphor of Luther of which Emil Brunner writes approvingly (B., Revelation and Reason, p. 276). Developing his own imagery Forsyth says of the Bible: "It is a sacrament" (p. 579); but later on it is "the element which mediates the one great Sacrament -- the historic grace of God in Christ" (p. 594). Italics mine.

3. Ibid., p. 576.

While his own Biblically inspired Christology was being intently wrought out, Forsyth was settling into a position somewhere between the extremes of stifling fundamentalism and latitudinarian rationalism that were to be found in the theological schools of his times. "The meticulousness of orthodoxy on the one hand, and of criticism on the other, has joined with other influences to make religion either vague or trivial . . . Bible scholars became pedants."[1] Herein is but the tedious, if somewhat modified, prolongation of an ancient feud: "The see-saw of the old supernaturalism and rationalism is interminable."[2] Forsyth can see no spiritual profit in fraternizing with either camp. But there is a middle course which can be safely pursued and there is a criterion which is both superlative and comprehensive in its application: "The final criticism of the Bible is not the "higher criticism" but the highest, the criticism whose principle is God's supreme object in Bible, Church, or even Christ -- the object of reconciling grace."[3]

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1. F., "The Evangelical Churches and the Higher Criticism," op. cit., pp. 597-598.

2. F., "Authority and Theology," The Hibbert Journal, (October, 1905), p. 68.

3. F., "The Evangelical Churches and the Higher Criticism," op. cit., p. 598.

Critics who labour under the rule of this principle pose no threat to the causa sacra of the Scriptures, and, operating from a necessary base in Christian faith, they have a worthy and essential duty to perform. "Everything turns on the . . . final authority of the Gospel, standing at the altar and receiving the sound contributions of the critical method."[1]

Whereas Luther tested Biblical passages by their direct, indirect and salutary connection with Christ, Forsyth uses the Scriptures as a whole in applying Luther's principle.[2] Actually Christ and the Gospel are one and the same in his thinking. The Scriptures are the semantic vehicle for conveying the Gospel, the kerygmatic core with all its corollaries.

Forsyth believes that "the perception of faith is the condition of any science of God; religion founds all theology."[3] Explaining his understanding of the place of scientific method in relation to the development of theology, he says:

A theology is scientific . . . according as it does

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1. F., "The Evangelical Churches and the Higher Criticism," op. cit., p. 598.

2. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 14.

3. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 100.

> justice to its creative fact, and serves as the expression, or exposition, of that revelation. The ground of real knowledge is perception, it is experience, it is our reaction to fact, it is not ideas; and it is experience not of our need but of something that rouses it, and then does more than fill it. Theology therefore does not appeal to a prior and surer philosophy; but a philosophy comes later, and it must take due account of the facts, and especially of the revelationary and experienced fact which theology expounds.[1]

The "fact" of which Forsyth speaks is the revelation of God in Jesus Christ. The "experience" to which he refers is the experience of God on the part of the faithful and renewed man in Christ. While he is certainly not anti-philosophical in his viewpoint, Forsyth definitely supports the priority of theology over philosophy in their relationship one to the other. Rational thought can serve faith "in due season" as the interpretative instrument.

> When we have found our soul's God on other than intellectual lines, it is quite possible for us to return to our mental process, to the logic of thought, and find in its donative quality features which corroborate the will's faith, and share in the convergence of all our powers on the God whose gift they are.[2]

It is thus that place and service are allowed to the power and processes of the human intellect.

In the thought of Forsyth man does not create

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1. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 95.
2. Ibid., p. 105.

truth, he only receives and obeys it. "Wisdom is over the thinker who loves it and seeks it; and the infinite wisdom is the holy Lord, King, and God."[1] Neither intellect nor thought alone can produce certainty, for this absolute assurance cannot exist apart from "an act of will, an act of appropriation by the personality."[2] And here the theologian moves into the realm of Voluntarism:

> Thought is a work . . . a duty, and not a mere process. . . . We are under obligation to seek and think the truth. . . . It is a task and not a treat. And we do not legislate for truth; we have to see that the law of thought has its way with us. Our chief act of will is practically recognition of a gift. It is obedience to a grace, even in science.[3]

However, in moving from Intellectualism into Voluntarism the thinker must proceed with caution. "Voluntarism means only the primacy of the will, not its monopoly."[4] Moreover, "a will, acting without reason, on other than intelligent principles, is not a will but a mere instinct or impulse."[5] Forsyth holds to the truth that our rational faculties are not all of us but are a part of the larger whole -- the moral personality, which is the more impressive and authoritative gift of God. In other

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1. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 100.
2. Ibidem.
3. Ibid., p. 101.
4. Ibidem.
5. Ibidem.

words, "the intellect may be the instrument of the will, but it is not its creature."[1] Even the will itself "is not the cause of truth but its recognition, its service. . . . in God Himself, His will is a perfect and eternal appropriation of His nature."[2] In the sphere of both the intellect and the will man is dependent on the authoritative God who descends upon him with His claim. According to Forsyth:

> The gift of God is more impressive and authoritative on our moral side. The conscience, which began its witness by owning the moral obligations of thought, comes to itself and its authority only as God saves it by His final light. That is what is meant by the primacy of the will for life or faith. It is the gift and will of God that we should find this final authority in the moral region of experience, of personal contact with Him, of communion with the holy, will in will. The only point it is desired to make here is that the authoritative note is not a monoply of our moral judgment, but is at the base of our intellectual processes also. It is articulate in conscience, but it is also active in thought.[3]

With will, conscience and intellect involved, there comes into being the certainty of God, the God who is able in and through Jesus Christ to bring will, conscience and intellect into harmony with His universe, a universe of

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1. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 102.
2. Ibid.,p. 102.
3. Ibid., p. 111.

which He is the ultimate moral Reality. These presuppositions enable Forsyth to deal theologically with both the profoundly ethical and the darkly tragic side of life.

The methodology of P. T. Forsyth is to be understood in the light of his presuppositions and of his conviction that "Christianity is concerned with God's holiness before all else; which issues to man as love, acts upon sin as grace, and exercises grace through judgment."[1] In his thought the holy God is equated with the "One who has His universal end completely in Himself, who is identical with the end of the disordered universe -- with its redemption. He is the Redeemer because He is identical with His own redemption."[2] This is not to say that God is the same as man's highest concept of love, goodness and fatherliness. It is to say that God is above all free, eternal, omnipotent, and inconceivable by the mind of man. He is actually unapproachable in majesty and beyond any human definition or ideas to which He cannot be confined. However, it pleased the holy God to condescent to man and to come into the earthly situation in revealing presence. This He did in the Incarnation and in the Cross of One who is both Son of God and Son

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1. F., The Cruciality of the Cross, p. viii.

2. F., The Justification of God, (London: Independent Press, Ltd., 1957), p. 63.

of man. In Jesus Christ it is revealed to man that he must reverentially fear and love God, who in the Person of His Son judges man's sin in love and is also its conqueror. Hence, in the convinced thought of Forsyth, Christology must be at the very heart of a sound Christian theology.

Believing that Jesus Christ bridges the "qualitative" chasm between the finite and the infinite, Forsyth employs the interpretative principle of paradox in his method of dealing with the immeasurably deep and reason-defying themes of the Incarnation and Atonement. Justifying this procedure, he says: "We do not touch the deep illogical things of God till we find paradox their only expression."[1] And again -- with a caveat thrown in:

> . . . when the soul is moved to its depths . . . then do . . . we flee for strength to the truths of paradox. . . . Life from its beginning is a vast vital contradiction. . . . the preacher must not be afraid of paradox. . . . Of course . . . a string of paradoxes, ingeniously invented, is one thing. It is smart, metallic, offensive. But the great, recurrent paradox of the spiritual life, revealed or discovered, is another thing. The haunting moral paradox of the Cross is another thing. And if we shun that . . . we have no Gospel to preach.[2]

Thus, the device of paradox, which Forsyth regards as

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1. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 203.
2. Ibid., p. 202-203.

quite indispensable to the evangelical theologian, is always to be used with discretion and discrimination. Furthermore, he believes that in considering those vast and vital matters of the Faith, when the "traffic" of rational thought seems to have come to an inevitable, complete and final halt in an apparently alogical cul de sac, the Christian thinker must never give up exploring the remotest possibility of a "way out." Even when faced with the challenge of those greatest and[illegible] from all the evidence that reason seems able to adduce -- utterly contradictory truths of "God and man . . . in a Godman and in a Cross. . . . The effort to adjust the great paradox could only cease with the paralysis of thought."[1] As he launches into his own labours in this area of Dogmatics Forsyth is under the strong conviction that there should by all means be a resumption of "the long movement of the Church's thought to pierce and clarify the mystery of godliness in Christ."[2] Yet in all of his dogmatic Christological development he proceeds with the awareness that "the nearer we are driven to the God of Christ, the more

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 72.
2. Ibid., p. 240.

we are forced on paradox when we begin to speak."[1] He therefore has no qualms about resorting to this interpretative principle as he develops his thought on the Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

Although he obviously uses the dogmatic approach, this procedure must be clarified if there is to be an adequate understanding of Forsyth's methodology. For him, "dogma is the science of faith."[2] The full meaning of this statement is found in the explanation that follows:

> It does not mean a science of thought attached to faith, like Greek metaphysics. It does not mean a metaphysic of Being. . . . Nor on the other hand does it mean a science of the subjective religious acts, a psychology of religion. But it means . . . the science of religion as a moral relation, a living and historic relation between two personalities, two consciences; which in Christianity is a redeeming relation. It is the science of realized redemption. It is a science wherein faith is not so much the observed object as the observing subject. It is faith thinking and not only faith thought of. . . . And it is upon the lines of such an ethical religion alone that we reach [the] moralizing of dogma.[3]

The distinctive flavour of Forsyth's Christology may be

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1. F., The Soul of Prayer, p. 71. Cf. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 305: "It is only by a paradox of thought that we possess our own souls and their reality."

2. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 215.

3. Ibid., p. 216.

said to inhere in this concluding phrase which he added to the pot pourri of twentieth century theological expression: "The moralizing of dogma." A correct understanding of this determinative principle is a necessity in getting at the mind of this creative theologian. But to have such an understanding requires close study of the writer's exposition. The moralizing of dogma certainly does not mean the reduction of Christianity to a system of morality and the demotion of Christ to the role of the world's greatest ethical teacher. "It is a poor error to think that the ethicizing of religion is its prompt application to present problems, or the reduction of religion to ethics, and faith to cold morality."[1] While this view may have wide-

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1. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 204. In an "Addendum on Religion and Ethic" in The Christian Ethic of War (pp. 59-63), Forsyth considers the merits and demerits of three kinds of relationship between religion and morality, holding that they may be treated as co-ordinate, identical or reciprocal. The first relationship is actually one of causality. "Either the religion produces the ethic, or the ethic the religion" (p. 60). If the former be true, it makes "the morality less than pure by introducing a pre-moral, a non-moral element (power or love)" (p. 61). If the latter be true, "it makes our religious certainty to rise from our moral success [in] a total subversion . . . of our Christian religion" (Ibidem). The second relationship, in which religion and morality are regarded as being one and the same, also has serious drawbacks. "We have either a mystic morality leading to pride or slackness, or we have an exigent religion leading to despair" (p. 62). Forsyth believes that the true view of the matter is to look upon religion and ethic as reciprocal, and this means ascribing to both a common source which is at one and the same time moral in nature and

spread appeal, it is but the "crypto-unitarianism of many who feed themselves and others on Christian sympathies and Christian ethic without Christian redemption."[1] What Forsyth has in mind is of a vastly different order. His "moralized" dogma represents -- it should be reiterated -- "the science of religion as a moral relation, a living and historic relation between two personalities, two consciences, which in Christianity is a redeeming relation."[2] By the moralizing of theology, or by the "ethicizing of religion" as he so frequently calls it, he proposes to show that morality is indeed "the nature of things" in all the province of theology, and he essays by this cohesive principle to bind together the various components of dogma in a harmonious whole. In this way he intends to demonstrate that"Christianity is a solution to the problem of life, which is a moral problem."[3] With specific reference

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religious in power. To say this is to point unerringly to the Christ who in His "One Person and Act [is] the source of both ethic and religion" (p. 63). In Him the distinction and identity of religion and morality are balanced and sustained. "We have the mystic Christ in us identical with the moral Christ for us" (Ibidem).

1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 81.

2. Ibid., p. 216. Cf. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 389: "To moralize religion is to make it personal as the Reformation did, and yet to rescue it from the subjectivity of Modernism and its collective egoism."

3. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 225.

to the Incarnation, the moralizing of this dogma means that "the Incarnation being for a moral and not a metaphysical purpose, must be in its nature moral."[1]

While firmly repudiating rationalistic metaphysics, Forsyth acknowledges the necessity for another kind of metaphysic in his Christological construction. The character of this metaphysic is indicated and explained:

> Some metaphysic is here involved, certainly, but it is a metaphysic of the conscience. It starts from the conviction that for life and history the moral is the real, and that the movements of the Great Reality must be morally construed as they are morally revealed. . . . As Christians we are united with Christ by a moral, i.e. a personal process; and can we think otherwise of the manner of His union with God which is its base? It is only in the way of moral modulation that the divine Logos could become true man.[2]

The metaphysic which Forsyth accepts and employs is actually that of personal and vital faith, with Redemption serving as its guiding principle.

> A metaphysic of some kind is bound up with a Christ of this kind. . . . It is impossible to think of One who changed the whole relation between the race and God without a metaphysic of the relation between that one and God. It is impossible to think of Christ as the personal concern of every person without a relation between His Person and every other which it is not an absurdity to conceive in the theological way which makes Christ the

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 219.

2. Ibid., pp. 222-223.

> agent of their creation. . . . Some metaphysic of personality is inevitable -- . . . It must be a metaphysic of faith itself. It must be some form of the post-Kantian metaphysic of ethic; a metaphysic of the ethic which culminates in God's supreme moral act of redemption and in man's supreme moral act of faith. It is along such lines that a modern Christology must be shaped.[1]

But Forsyth wants to make sure that he will not be misunderstood, so he makes a succinct distinction. "A faith in metaphysic is one thing, and a metaphysic of faith is another."[2] While the former prevailed too much in theology and religion in the past, Forsyth believes that the latter will come into its own in the future.

Tempered by his presuppositions, the whole Christology of this "moral" theologian is built around the finality of the suprahistoric Christ understood in terms of the guiding principle of redemption and within the framework of the metaphysic of conscience. He interprets Christ's unity of being along "those ethical lines which alone consist with personal relation and explain it."[3] In a prophetic, though perhaps overly sanguine, spirit he declares of his mode of theological procedure:

The moral and experimental method in theology will

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 355-356.

2. Ibid., p. 356.

3. Ibid., p. 231.

> give us, from its congeniality with the source of our revelation in a personal Saviour, results as great and commanding in their sphere as did the application of the other experimental method of induction so appropriate to natural science.[1]

It can be definitely asserted that the presuppositions and methodology of P. T. Forsyth provide him with the ground and freedom to develop a Christocentric theology which is both ethical and evangelical.

> In Forsyth's system morality is not closed but open. It does not set up a law but offers at most a guiding, interpretative, but, above all, illuminable principle. It does not detract from revelation but provides the means for its exaltation.[2]

Forsyth very clearly aligns his Christological thought with the concept of revelation as an ethical act of God Consequently his methodology yields that ethical evangelical theology to which all his dogmatic labours are dedicated, a goal which is clearly indicated in relation to his proposed work in Christology:

> Let the doctrine [of Christ] be reconstructed, reinterpreted, restated -- what you will. Provided two things. First that the task be essayed by competent and reverent people and not by amateurs. . . . Indeed the work can really be done only by the collective Church in earnest

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 231.

2. N. H. G. Robinson, Christ and Conscience, (London: James Nisbet & Company, Ltd., 1956), p. 142.

> faith, working on the contributions of individuals equipped and morally serious. And second, provided that what is aimed at is religious truth, which is so much more than the results of severe historical criticism; truth as it is in Jesus and not about Jesus; truth which is the Church's supernatural faith giving a rational account of itself; the truth of a faith which is not natural religion, but an invasion of the natural man, and an enclave in the course of history; the order of truth which . . . is the substantial, distinctive and evangelical truth of the Church's experience.[1]

With this delineation of the task of theology firmly fixed in his mind, Forsyth develops his Christological thought with the concern that it be presented "according to the true mode of its constitutive elements."[2] He believes that the aim of all theologians, himself included, should be to present "not so much a new system of theology, as a new pronunciation of theology . . . theology uttered with a change of accent."[3] He then goes on to explain:

> In order of importance we should go to the world first of all with the Atoning Cross which is the Alpha and Omega of grace; second with the resurrection of Christ which is the emergence into experience of the new life won for us on the Cross; third with the life, character, teaching, and miracles of Christ; fourth, with the pre-existence of Christ, which is a corollary of His Eternal Life, and only after such things with the Virgin Birth, which may or may not be demanded by the rest. It is not a case of denying any of these points. They may all be accepted, but let it be in their true perspective, the perspective of

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 240.

2. Mozley, "The Theology of Dr. Forsyth," op. cit., p. 169.

3. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 87.

faith.[1]

Truly it is from the perspective of faith that Forsyth carries out his own theological enterprise. In discussing "The Place of Spiritual Experience in the Making of Theology" he speaks and writes as one to whom such experience has come and to whom it has been deeply meaningful. However, something more than experience is needed for the proper and effective handling of vast doctrinal themes. To attempt this on "a basis of experience alone lands us in individualism, subjectivism, and romantic temperamental theology."[2] The thing that matters most and is needed most is faith. "Faith is the great thing; and faith is not an experience in the sense of a mood, but as response to a revelation."[3] It can be stated even more definitely and emphatically that: "The mystery and the power of Christianity is faith -- understood not merely as a religious sympathy or affection, but as direct personal communion with Christ, based on forgiveness of sins direct from Him to the conscience."[4] Furthermore, "the recon-

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1. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 87.

2. F., "The Place of Spiritual Experience in the Making of Theology," op. cit., p. 186.

3. Ibid., p. 185.

4. F., Rome, Reform and Reaction (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1899), p. 92f.

ciliation of faith and experience exists but in the object of our faith -- the Reconciler."[1] The source of faith, as well as its objective ground, is Jesus Christ present in the Spirit. Therefore, the "burden" of the minister as theologian must be "an objective gospel, which descends on our experience both to kindle and to correct it."[2] Such a gospel is the unfailing inspiration and guideline in all of Forsyth's Christological thinking.

Finally, it should be observed that Forsyth teaches as one whom "God taught . . . what sin was and the theology of its cure."[3] This is a decisive matter where Christology is concerned, for "only the saved have the real secret of the Saviour."[4] Such a vital experience has given to Forsyth a first-hand knowledge of the Great Physician of souls and His curative ministry. From this vantage point he can appreciate that "moralisation of Christology" so

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1. F., "The Place of Spiritual Experience in the Making of Theology," op. cit., p. 185.

2. Ibidem., op. cit., p. 186.

3. Ibidem. This is one of the rare instances where Forsyth indulges in personal testimony. Cf. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 196-198; F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 193.

4. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 219.

forcefully expressed in Melanchthon's Loci of 1521.

> The knowledge of Christ is to know his benefits, taste his salvation, and experience his grace. . . . To know him to purpose is to know the demand of the conscience for holiness, the source of power to meet it, where to seek grace for our sin's failure, how to set up our sinking soul in the face of the world, the flesh, and the devil, how to console the conscience broken.[1]

Forsyth sees eye to eye with Melanchthon that the Person and Work of Christ must be viewed in relation to each other if there is to be a valid interpretation of either. "The character of Christ rests on His person; and His person has universal and eternal value for us only as it takes effect, condensed but entire, in His act of death and rising as God's final and endless act of holy redeeming love."[2] The Incarnation is not to be understood apart from the Work of Christ which centres in His Cross. Neither are"His benefits" to be understood apart from the Incarnation. From a theological perspective the matter can be stated thus:

> Theologically, faith in Christ means that the person of Christ must be interpreted by what that saving action of God in Him requires, that Christ's work is the master key to His person, that His benefits interpret His nature. It means,

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 220f.

2. F., Theology in Church and State, p. 26. (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1915).

> when theologically put, that Christology is the corollary of Soteriology; for a Christology vanishes with the reduction of faith to mere religion.[1]

This chapter will take up first the "Person" and then the "Work" of Jesus Christ in the thought of P. T. Forsyth. There is a certain naturalness to this procedure since on the human level the "being" of a person necessarily comes before what he does. Furthermore, this order will be following the way in which Forsyth himself dealt with Christological themes.[2] It is believed that the order of treatment is really immaterial in relation to the thought under consideration.

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 6.

2. This statement depends on Forsyth's assertion in the Preface of The Work of Christ that this volume originated in the form of lectures which "took place immediately after the delivery of my Congregational Lecture on The Person and Place of Christ, which they supplement" (p. xxx). It further depends on a concluding remark in the Preface of Forsyth's chief Christological work: "It may be useful to add that the lectures were undertaken ten years ago when the lines of treatment were being then laid down in the writer's mind. . ." (p. ix).

2. The Person of Jesus Christ

In order to understand the Person of Jesus Christ in the creative and provocative thought of P. T. Forsyth it is imperative that his theological presuppositions and methodology be kept closely in mind while his various Christological concepts are being considered. And, to begin with, it may well be noted that Forsyth's subscription to the principle of the "moralizing of dogma" commits him to a new approach to Christology. "The . . . moralization of religion . . . prescribes a new manner of inquiry on such a central subject as the person of Christ."[1] This inquiry is essentially that of determining what must be thought of the Christ who brought to pass the new creation of the moral soul of man to which the Bible bears fundamental witness. Such an investigation starts, as Forsyth believes, "from the conviction that for life and history the moral is the real, and that the movements of the Great Reality must be morally construed as they are morally revealed."[2] This is to say

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 222.

2. Ibid., p. 222f. Cf. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 209: "A real theology is that which is framed under the primacy, not of the rational or scientific, but of the moral, that is, of the holy. Everything here turns on the hegemony of personality, on its central organ

that "the spiritual world is not the world of noetic process or cosmic force, but of holy, i.e. moral, order, act, and power."[1] Pressing this point sets the thought of Forsyth inexorably on collision course with Chalcedonian Christology and he says:

> Now concerning the union of the two natures in Christ the old dogma thought in a far too natural and non-moral way. Its categories were too elemental and physical. It conceived it as an act of might, of immediate divine power, an act which united the two natures into a person rather than through that person. It united them miraculously rather than morally, into the existence of the incarnate personality rather than by its action. The person was the resultant of the two natures rather than the agent of their union. They were united into a person whose action only began after the union, and did not affect it. It began (according to the dogma) in the miraculous conception, which was not an ethical act, rather than in the grace of the eternal son, who, for our sakes, from rich became poor.[2]

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as conscience, on its central energy as will, on its central malady as sin, on its central destiny as redemption."

1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 223.

2. Ibid., p. 223. Cf. F., Religion In Recent Art, p. 363: "There, in the moral personality of Christ, is the sacred soil and fertile field for the rise of better answers to the old problems than have yet been given." It must not be assumed that Forsyth was scornful of early creeds and creed-makers. In his Theology in Church and State, with Chalcedon evidently in mind, he says in a charitable spirit: "The first thing we have to recognize in creeds of the past is that however lamentable may have been the proceedings of certain councils, the existence of the creeds was due to a moral necessity rising at a crisis out of the nature of the Gospel as it faced the world" (p. 106).

In the reconstruction of the classic formula on an ethical basis it even becomes misleading to talk about "union." The difficulty here, Forsyth maintains, is in the materialistic connotation of the word. "Union is a term too physical, too natural," and this is even true of "terms like permeation or interpenetration."[1] Great care must therefore be exercised to avoid the common yet erroneous way of speaking of Christ as a kind of human receptacle who by an effusion of the Holy Spirit became brimful of God-ness. Once again the offence -- of which early twentieth century Liberalism is particularly guilty -- is against the moral basis of the Incarnation, in that it is but "a poor and passive idea of humanity instead of a moral, which must be active even in its receptivity."[2] Stating the case more vividly and meta-

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 223f.

2. Ibid., p. 224. Cf. Ibid., p. 352; also F., "Revelation and the Person of Christ," op. cit., p. 119f: "We may not think of Christ as a human receptacle, whose consecration was in the contents alone. It is quite inadequate to say that the mould of His human personality was willingly and entirely filled by the Spirit of God." This is a popular though -- as Forsyth declares -- heterodox way of "explaining" the mystery of the person of Christ. In 1950 Dr. Roy Smith of the Methodist Church of America wrote a pamphlet for Church Membership classes entitled: "I Believe in Jesus Christ" (Abingdon-Cokesbury Press: Nashville) in which the divine-human personality was illustrated by the figure of a child's sand-bucket dipped into the infinite sea and holding every drop of the ocean that it could possibly contain. Forsyth would never have approved of this analogy.

phorically, here is but the repetition of an error of the long past which conceived of the human nature of Christ "as no more than a coat which was put on, while the divine became but a palladium dropped from Heaven in human form, with an action more mechanical than moral."[1]

Forsyth holds that the Christology of Chalcedon bears the clear impress of having been conditioned by a now outdated Greek metaphysic and this poses a real problem for modern man.

> The formula of the union of two natures in one person is essentially a metaphysical formula, and the formula of a Hellenic metaphysic, and it is more or less archaic for the modern mind. The term "nature" is a purely metaphysical term, and one which characterises a scholastic metaphysic of being rather than a modern metaphysic of ethic. The metaphysic of being, if not banished from modern science, tends to be retained only in so far as the moral is regarded as the real, and the key to being is found in personality.[2]

Furthermore, to appreciate "what was lost in a Church dominated by a Chalcedonian metaphysic with an Aristotelian editing" is to recall "what really made Christianity in the first century."[3] This was none other than "a moral and religious experience, in the contact of a historic Redeemer with the living and personal experience

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 224.
2. Ibid., p. 229.
3. Ibid., p. 218.

of redemption"[1] This was the vital element that was lost in the Church and remained lost "till the personal faith of the New Testament was rescued from a religion chiefly institutional and creedal at the Reformation."[2]

It is not surprising to Forsyth that the dogma of the person of Christ in its classic form has given perplexity to generation after generation of theologians. He rightly observes that no dogma has been more susceptible to the impact of progressive changes in the intellectual climate of Christendom. Actually, this susceptibility -- amounting to vulnerability -- while it is not difficult to explain, is of no little importance to this discussion. And Forsyth succeeds so well with his "case history" that he deserves to be quoted at some length:

> The Chalcedonian or Athanasian form of belief, which is embalmed in the current formula of two natures in one person in Christ, may be said to have been seriously shaken wherever modern conditions have been realized. This has occurred the more readily as the creeds in which it was embodied served for their day the purpose rather of repelling errors than of adjusting truths. The truths were not really and inwardly adjusted but only placed together; and they were thus the more easily shaken apart. They were married but not wedded, or if wedded not welded; and though

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 218.
2. Ibidem.

> they lived in the same house, it was not without friction. The human mind, the moral experience, were not yet ripe enough. Psychology, and especially religious psychology, had not then come into existence; and, while the strongest assertions were made about the existence of the two natures as a postulate of faith, it was beyond the power of the metaphysic which then prevailed to show how they could cohere in a personal unity. The attempts failed even at a later date, when a doctrine of mutual permeation took the place of a doctrine of conjunction and mutual action. With the modern growth of psychology, and the modern revolution of metaphysic, such formulae were bound to dissolve. They were based on an early metaphysic of natures and a crude science of personality.[1]

Yet Forsyth shows no inclination to gloat over any discrediting of what he calls in one place "the somewhat stiff mentality of the Apostolic Fathers, or the Christianized philosophy of the Apologists with their logism."[2] Such a negative and vacuous reaction would not provide an answer to a pressing problem. "No dissolution of the old dogma prevents the Christological question from still being the question of the hour and of the future for religious thought."[3] A more constructive approach to the so-

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, P. 217. Forsyth's diagnostic comments are reminiscent of the picturesque simile which A. G. Bruce in The Humiliation of Christ attributes to the Lutherans in their criticism of the two-nature doctrine in Reformed theology: "According to the Reformed conception of the union, the two natures were simply glued together like two boards, without any real communion" (p. 120).

2. Ibid., p. 47.

3. Ibid., p. 218.

lution of this problem is intimated, he believes, in the hopeful signs of a return to the Bible, and, specifically, to the Gospel of the Bible. The scriptural doctrine of the Person of Christ serves as a much better starting point than the ecclesiastical development of the dogma. "And it is satisfactory for this reason: It remoralizes the whole issue by restoring it to personal religion."[1] Forsyth points out that such a reorientation of Christological thought had been temporarily and imperfectly achieved in the Reformation. With renewed Biblical emphasis "on the conscience and on the guilty conscience, Christianity became once more personal and evangelical; that is, it became predominantly ethical."[2] Unfortunately, the leaders of the Reformation really adopted only half-hearted measures in moralizing the dogma of Christ's Person. While commendable and fresh attention was being given to the religious side of the redemptive work and of justification by faith, the Reformers slipped into the old

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 218.

2. Ibidem. Cf. F., "The Cross as the Final Seat of Authority," The Contemporary Review (October, 1899). Here Forsyth says: "The Reformation took an indispensable step that the best work of the Church had made inevitable, when Luther transferred the supreme problem of life to the area of personal conscience" (p. 597).

pattern of thought with respect to the Incarnation.

> The Reformers, with all their new departure in the religion of Redemption and Justification, took over the substance of the old theology about the divine nature that gave Christ His redeeming power. With all their moralizing at the close of Christ's life they did not duly moralize its beginning, or the heavenly act which preceded and prescribed its beginning.[1]

The consequence of this Reformation procedure is to ring down a curtain of discontinuity between the Incarnation and the Atonement. There is thus "a paralyzing division down the middle of the divine action in Christ" which produces "the ethical effect of Christ on man crossed by an initiative on God's side when Christ left heaven, which was more metaphysical or miraculous than it was moral."[2] The ultimate contribution of the Reformation to the reformulation of a Christology, both firm in regard to ancient truth and yet flexible enough to accommodate the moral insights of modern times, was therefore of a limited nature.

The deceleration of moral momentum in the post-Reformation period invited a return of theological minds

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 234.

2. Ibidem. Forsyth goes on to say with keen perceptiveness: "If its first condition is an incarnation made possible only by such an act of power as underlies the union of natures into a composite person, then the redemption is unreal. It is a phantasmagory" (p. 235).

to intellectualist preoccupation. "The great moral vis of the Reformation subsided into the renewed intellectualism of the seventeenth century dogmatists, so able, so acute, and so irrelevant to life."[1] In natural reaction to this development there came, under the stimulating influence of the Enlightenment, a counter swing toward a larger rationalism and a warmer humanism.

> Correction then became inevitable; and it came from the Illumination, the rationalist, human movement of the eighteenth century, with its science and its romance, its enlargement both of interest and of heart, its sense of the world and of humanity, its concrete realism.[2]

The rise of Hegelianism represented a strenuous effort "to scholasticise Christianity anew, and to rationalize Christology on the largest lines."[3] However, Hegelianism ran its course and ultimately failed completely in its high objective. Forsyth gives a brief resume of the waxing and waning of this movement:

> The older and narrower Rationalism had simply abolished Christology by reducing Christ to a mere man, and any science of Him to the psychology of genius. And Hegel seemed to restore all by discovering a Christology in the very nature of thought and being. But the capture of Hegel by his extreme left has brought his system

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1. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 110.
2. Ibidem.
3. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 218.

> to much the same effect as the old rationalism. While the reformed and evangelical spirit has, by its revival, notably in Schleiermacher, Ritschl, and others, discredited all the Hegelian constructions.[1]

It is over against this background of thought and counter-thought, of appreciating and of depreciating the moral kernel of Christology as he sees and analyzes it, that Forsyth proposes to make his own contribution toward the long movement of the Church's reasoned attempt "to pierce and clarify the mystery of godliness in Christ."[2]

1. The Concept of the Deity of Jesus Christ

(1) The Incarnation

According to Forsyth there are two truths that must be acknowledged and maintained in any proper understanding of the Incarnation. On the one hand, the utmost care must be exercised to safeguard the initiative and absoluteness of God.

> Nothing must be done to imperil the absoluteness, the freedom, of God, His creative initiative on grounds entirely within Himself. Accordingly, the union in a corporeal Christ can only be an exalted form of God's relation to those finite conditions which underlay the existence of a created world . . . a relation within the absolute God, an immanence of the world in the Transcendent, of the corporeal personality in the spiritual.[3]

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 218f.
2. Ibid., p. 240.
3. Ibid., p. 344.

On the other hand, the genuine realness of human life must be preserved.

> Nothing must be done to impair the reality of human life, the conditions of its finitude, the necessity of growth within the course of time. It begins with certain possibilities, with a destiny engrained in the protoplast; but it only passes from a destiny into a perfection through a career.[1]

This earnest theologian recognizes the problem of the apparent contradictions represented in the concept of "absolute God and relative man, absolute finality and growing attainment, absolute Grace and growth in Grace, the victory won and yet the victory to be won, the Kingdom come and the Kingdom coming."[2] Nevertheless, standing firmly on his premise that the unity is "an exalted form of God's relation to those finite conditions which underlay the existence of a created world, and made it at the same time a finished world,"[3] Forsyth believes that the solution of the problem is to be found in the alogical but dynamic unity of the Person of Jesus Christ:

> It is not in a monumental person but in an active, not in a quiescent personality, statuesque and ideal, but in one who exists in a vast movement and is consummated in a crucial act. The union

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 344f.
2. Ibid., p. 345.
3. Ibid., p. 344.

> means that this act or movement is twofold. In a sense, but in no monistic sense, we have one nature, in two modes of action; for moral reality must be in heaven what it is on earth. It is a polar movement, the reconciliation of two directions, two tendencies, and not the fusion of two quantities, and certainly not of two forces. It is wills that are concerned; and wills are not forces so much as elective and directive powers over forces.[1]

If will be considered a force, then it is only so in the sense that it chooses, aims, coordinates and concentrates other forces. Upon this ground we have in Christ "the union of two moral movements or directions, and not merely of two forces or things; and we have their reconciliation and not merely their confluence, their mutual living involution and not simply their inert conjunction."[2] The religious purpose of the union of the two movements in Christ, which is His will, is that of the salvation of man and his restoration to communion with God.

For Forsyth the key to understanding the Incarnation is Soteriology.

> The canon for the Incarnation . . . is soteriological. It is the work of Christ that gives us the key to the nature of Christ. It is the experience of faith in His work that alone opens to us the person and the deity of Christ as the creator of the new life with God.[3]

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 345.
2. Ibid., p. 346.
3. Ibidem.

This is not meant to imply that "the experience of faith in His work" reveals to the individual or to the Church the whole personality of Christ at any particular point of time. As in the faith-experience of the apostles, so also today there is required a cosmic interpretation of Christ's work which transcends the experience of any individual. "If the effect of Christ on us be but our reconciliation . . . that is an effect that might have been produced by a prophet and martyr of unparalleled sanctity and unquenchable love."[1] Such a subjective construction of Christ's work would not necessitate "the belief to which the early Church was driven by the apostolic sense of what they had in Christ -- the belief in His pre-existence."[2] The only way in which the work of Christ can interpret His Person in an exhaustive sense is when that "work" is regarded "as the new creation in nuce."[3] It is the miracle of a work of such magnitude that compels the highest possible estimate of Christ. "Nothing lower than the Holy God could re-hallow the guilty human soul."[4]

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 279.

2. Ibid., p. 280.

3. Ibidem.

4. Ibid., p. 281. Cf. F., The Cruciality of the Cross, p. 19: "The divinity of Christ is what the Church was driven upon to explain the effect on it of the cross."

It is from the aforementioned point of view that Forsyth can insist that "the question of Christ is not a question of a divine hypostasis but of a divine Saviour. . . . Christology turns on a Soteriology."[1] This insistent premise furnishes the ground for the Forsythian concept of the Person of Jesus Christ. Coupled with it are the twin notions of Kenosis and Plerosis which in turn have their grounding in the pre-existence of Christ. In the discussion which follows an attempt will be made to show how Forsyth's Christological thought is developed on this basis and how it is conducive to that concept of Christ's Person which leads him to conclude that "Christ is more precious to us by what distinguishes Him from us than by what identifies Him with us."[2] However, before the subject of the pre-existence of Christ and the related idea of His cosmic significance in the teaching of P. T. Forsyth are taken up, a brief consideration should be given to this theologian's attitude toward that doctrine of the Incarnation which has to do with the miraculous

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1. F., The Cruciality of the Cross, p. 16. Many similar citations could be given. This is a point which Forsyth makes with almost monotonous regularity in all his Christological writing.

2. F., "The Distinctive Thing In Christian Experience," The Hibbert Journal (April, 1908), p. 486.

birth of Jesus.

It is Forsyth's tireless contention that a knowledge of the true identity of Jesus Christ is not reached through subscription to certain tenets but through moral verdict and decision. "What think ye of Christ? . . . Your opinion is not asked about the miracle of His birth or any other single point."[1] It is not surprising therefore that the questionable doctrine of the Virgin Birth is relegated to the periphery of Christological concern. "We should lean but lightly on the Virgin Birth, which does not make a moral appeal to us, but too often appeals to a ready interest either in a baby or a miracle."[2] While the doctrine may be a part of the traditional teaching of the Church, it is not a vital part such as the Incarnation, to which it is not intrinsic. By the standards of true orthodoxy "to deny the Virgin Birth is heterodox, but to deny the Incarnation is heretical."[3] Furthermore, as Forsyth sees it:

The key to the Incarnation is not in the cradle,

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1. F., Missions in State and Church, p. 60. For Forsyth the focus of Christology is always on the Person rather than a proposition relating to that Person.

2. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 87.

3. F., "Orthodoxy, Heterodoxy, Heresy, and Freedom," The Hibbert Journal (January, 1910), p. 323.

> but in the Cross. The light on Bethlehem falls from Calvary. The virtue lies in some act done by Christ; and He Himself did no act in His birth, but in His death He did the act of the universe. The soul of the Incarnation does not lie in His being born of a pure virgin; but it lies in the death of his pure soul and the perfect obedience of His will as a propitiation for the sins of the world. God was in Christ as reconciler, not as prodigy. The key to the Incarnation lies, not in the miracle performed on His mother, but in the act of redemption performed by Himself.[1]

While the narratives in Matthew and Luke having to do with the birth of Jesus have been the focus of much critical activity, the settlement of the matter is not really in the hands of the critics, either literary or historical. This is due to the fact that the question is fundamentally theological rather than critical. According to Forsyth, the decisive factor that impinges on the problem has to do with the integrity of the Gospel and especially with the requirements of the grace of holy God toward sinful man:

> Was such a mode of entry into the world indispensable for Christ's mode of redemption? If it was otiose to that work then we can leave it to the methods of the critics. But if it was essential to that work we must refuse them the last word. If it was essential to the perfect holiness of Christ's redeeming obedience, what is unhappily called His sinlessness, then it must stand, whatever the critics say.[1]

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1. F., God the Holy Father, p. 40.

2. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 14. Cf. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 361: "It

Though Forsyth dodges a direct response to the issue he has posed -- "I am not here called on to decide that question"[1] -- elsewhere in his writings he indicates his probable reply. In his book, The Church, the Gospel and Society, he clearly implies that the question of the Virgin Birth is bound up in the larger question of what constitutes moral authority in the Church. And Forsyth declares emphatically: "It is not truths extracted from the Bible and guaranteed by prophecy and miracle. This is antiquated supernaturalism with its doctrinaire orthodoxy."[2] The Christian Creed really has only one article, in comparison with which all other articles pale into insignificance. "It is the Gospel of God's redeeming Grace in Christ."[3]

(2) The Pre-existent and Cosmic Christ

It is Forsyth's conviction that if there is a diminishing emphasis on the Virgin Birth there must be -- after the example of the apostle Paul -- an increase of

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is to be noted . . . that were the Virgin birth beyond historic criticism it might not by itself give us a pre-existent Christ, and it need not give us more than an Arian."

1. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 14.

2. P. T. Forsyth, The Church, the Gospel and Society (London: Independent Press Ltd., 1962), p. 67.

3. Ibid., p. 69.

emphasis on the pre-existence of Christ.[1] In support of this latter concept he alludes to the teaching of the Fourth Gospel and to Matthew 11:27, from which the idea is inseparable. The paucity of Synoptic references may be explained, he believes, by the fact that Jesus was often reticent about matters of the profoundest import. "They may be few just because [it] bulked unspeakably in Christ's mind."[2] Another possible explanation is to be found in the fact that in teaching His pre-existence Jesus would be going against the most sacrosanct tenet of Judaism. "It was a belief whose challenge went to the heart of Jewish Monotheism."[3] A certain reserve in speaking on

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 261. Forsyth has strong feelings about the importance of the doctrine of pre-existence. In Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind he recommends to ministers the preaching of a sermon on the difficult theme of Pre-destination by connecting this New Testament teaching with the pre-existence of Jesus Christ. He is convinced that: "People . . . will listen to preaching about the soul's destiny . . . about its being bound up with God's timeless thought, will and purpose -- a purpose pre-intelligent, pre-active and pre-redeeming. . . . Faith in an eternally slain Christ is the foundation for the Church of all certainty of salvation, all divine destiny for the soul. . . . We were from the first where Christ, by God's eternal will, ever is" (p. 96).

2. Ibid., p. 266. Forsyth adds: "His thoughts about His death were unutterable, except in an act."

3. Ibid., p. 274.

this subject was almost obligatory, for: "If he had been explicit and categorical about His pre-existent life it would have been to invite from a Jewish crowd a death as certain as Rome's suppression of Him would have been had He raised the Messiah's flag."[1] But, these explanations aside, Forsyth is rightly impatient with those "concordance critics" who apply a quantitative test to every theological idea projected in the Scriptures. A rare reference may carry great weight, as he believes to be the case in the allusions to kenosis and pre-existence in Philippians 2. Paul was no professor of Dogmatics and it is not surprising that his theology often comes in more as obiter dictum than as duly proportioned and studied truth. However, the strength and clarity of the apostolic testimony far more than makes up for the restraint of the Synoptics. Forsyth explains this as follows:

> The apostles could not evade the idea of a pre-existence which may have come home to Christ Himself only in the uplifted hours and the great crises. . . . St. Paul's belief in the pre-existence of Christ . . . did not rest on Christ's words. It was an inevitable rebound of spiritual logic under his faith's obsession by the Christ in glory. Such glory, such Godhead could not be acquired by any moral victory of a created being within the limits of a life so brief as that of Jesus. . . . And so, from the exalted glory of Christ, Paul's thought was cast back, by the very

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 275f.

> working of the Christ in him, and in the whole consciousness of the Church's faith, to the same Christ from all Eternity by the Father's side.[1]

According to Forsyth, in Paul's Epistles, the Fourth Gospel, the teaching of Jesus, and in the Council of Nicaea, the view of the pre-existence of Christ is "in terms of the Son and not in terms of the Logos."[2] And the relationship of the Son to the Father was a totally unique one. "He was not a person who became a son, or was destined to be a son, but his whole personality was absolute sonship."[3] Such absolute sonship is consistent with Christ's possession of divine and saving power and therefore could not have come into being at any particular point of time.

> Such a relation as we believe our Saviour now bears to the Father could not have arisen at a point of time. It could not have been created by His earthly life. The power to exercise God's prerogative of forgiveness, judgment and redemption could never have been acquired by the moral excellence or

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 268-269. Forsyth goes on to observe: "I do not think that today we can evade this same retrospective pressure of our faith, when its tide is full, any more than the apostles could."

2. F., "Does the Church Prolong the Incarnation?" The London Quarterly Review (January, 1920), p. 212. Forsyth further maintains that "the Logos theology has impaired the moral effect of the theology of the Holy Spirit, stifled the moral note of the Kingdom as it ruled Christ, and arrested the effect of a gospel of moral redemption and personal reconciliation" (Ibidem).

3. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 285.

> religious achievement of any created being, however endowed by the spirit of God.[1]

Forsyth declares that it was not due to dogmatic interest but religious that the idea of the pre-existence of Christ the Son sprang up and flourished in the Church. "It was to give full and infinite effect to the condescending love of God, and to give range to the soul's greatness by displaying the vast postulates of its redemption."[2] While a limited form of reconciliation might be effected between God and man by someone who originated in time, such a person could never do the mighty and finished work that the pre-existent Christ did for men. "A man might reconcile us to God but he could not unite us for ever with God in the way that an eternal holiness requires."[3] No "adoptionist" theory of the Person of Christ can therefore be countenanced. It was solid faith in a redeeming Christ who in Himself was the never beginning and never ending holy Love of Eternal God that called forth -- and will continue to call forth -- the life, the praise, and the worship of the Church Universal.

> The Cross was the reflection (or say rather the historic pole) of an act within Godhead. The

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 269.
2. Ibid., p. 277.
3. Ibid., p. 282.

> historic victory was the index and correlate of a choice and conquest in Godhead itself. Nothing less will carry the fulness of faith, the swelling soul, and the Church's organ voice of liturgy in every land and age. If our thought does not allow that belief, we must reduce the pitch of faith to something plain, laic and songless, and, in making it more homely, make it less holy, less absolute, less adoring.[1]

It is apparent that it is mainly on ethical and experimental grounds that Forsyth argues the case for the pre-existence of Christ. However he turns more to logic when he approaches the subject from the standpoint of preserving the unity of God's nature. If at one moment in the midst of time Christ performed his reconciling work, if it had no context in eternity, then there would have to be a change in the very nature of God. Yet the unchangeableness of God is guaranteed by His holiness, so that no temporal event can be allowed to alter His essential character. Therefore there must be some kind of underlying continuity between what Christ did as the Son of God in the flesh and his ante-natal existence in the Godhead. It is this problem that Forsyth has in mind when he says:

> What God felt and did . . . was not through some relation to us that came into being with Christ's earthly life, but it was through something that underlay it. For had it come into being then, to

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 270f.

> see and judge the world in Christ would have been a step so new as to affect the unchangeableness of God. Grace would have begun, and so been finite. But it was a step which lay in the nature of Godhead forever, in the eternal, personal, holy, and obedient relation of the Son to the Father, and in the act of renunciation outside the walls of the world.[1]

Thus the earthly work of Christ is conceived as being "but the exercise in historic conditions of an eternal resolve taken in heavenly places."[2] Forsyth even goes so far as to say that "the heavenly side of salvation was . . . historic, though it was premundane history."[3] In this way of thinking the forgiveness of God is not reduced to a mere temporality, rather is the eternal quality of the grace of God asserted and His sovereignty maintained and assured.

There is the danger of introducing an element of docetism into Christological thought by an emphasis on the pre-existence of Christ and Forsyth is aware of it. He therefore inquires: "Could a pre-existent Christ be a real man?"[4] The answer is both positive and cogent. "A personal unreality could never become the first personal

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 273.
2. Ibid., p. 270.
3. Ibid., p. 272.
4. Ibid., p. 289.

influence in history that the Christ from heaven has become."[1] Forsyth then goes on to a forceful reaffirmation and a pertinent observation:

> His pre-existence . . . has not robbed him of the reality that is shown in vast historic effect. And it may be observed . . . that if the influence of the Church upon the world is less today than it once was, that loss of effect is at least concurrent with an unprecedented weakening of belief within the Church itself in His life before life and His ante-natal will.[2]

Forsyth is much in agreement with the teaching of Irenaeus in emphasizing the deity of Jesus Christ in terms of His pre-existence. But there is a distinction between the methods by which the two thinkers work out this idea. Irenaeus affirms the pre-existence of Christ as the eternal pre-existence of the Logos. He believes that the Logos is the Yahveh of the Old Testament and the Son of God of the New Testament. He interprets Christ as essentially equal with God and therefore an object of worship. Forsyth, on the contrary, does not develop his view of the pre-existence of Christ in terms of the Logos. Instead he utilizes such phrases as "life before life" and "ante-natal will" in his interpretation of Christ's pre-existence. On the other hand he is in agreement with

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 290.
2. Ibidem.

Irenaeus in believing that Christ is an object of worship in His being essentially equal with God.

Closely related to Forsyth's emphasis on the pre-existence of Christ is the importance he attaches to the cosmic significance of His Person. A word which occurs many times in his Christological writing is the German Weltanschauung or "world view." A system of thought which claims to explain life and experience as a whole may be expected to present a satisfactory view of the world, and, for the Christian in whose faith Christ is central, He must be shown to be the summit from which the true world-view is obtained. This the Christian thinker essays to do by the theory of the supra-mundane, cosmic Christ. If in Christ God is seen in personal action within history in and for mankind, the thought may reasonably be extended to God's eternal purpose for the world as a whole, especially if the maxim is accepted that the moral is the real.

> If in Christ we have found the heart of God and the secret of His action with men, we have also found the divine purpose for the whole world, the divine action in the world, and the divine principle of history. We have the ground of all things in the goal of all things. The total effect of Christ's redemption is not to be sought in the soul alone, as if it were only by His action on the soul . . . that He secured the great consummation. For the whole creation groans

> for Redemption, and is included in the process which works for the manifestation of the Sons of God.[1]

In His being eternal and transcendent Christ is also the Lord of creation. And the God who rules the universe is also the same God who has revealed Himself in the face of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Forsyth sees the very closest connection between Creation and Redemption, between Creator and Redeemer.

> The ground plan of an evolving creation, and indeed of Being, is God's redemptive will. . . . We are born into a redeemed world. We are created for redemption, created by One who knew in creating that He had in Himself all the resources wherewith to deal with freedom's abuse of His creation. Beneath, behind, and above God the Creator is God the Redeemer.[2]

Thus, in the thought of Forsyth: Christus Creator est Christus Redemptor. This is a theory discussed and advocated a generation ago by H. W. Clark in his scholarly book, The Cross and the Eternal Order.[3] It is interesting to find this writer observing that the Christus Creator: Christus Redemptor synthesis of Paul had been quite lost

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1. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 206.

2. Ibid., p. 184.

3. H. W. Clark, The Cross and the Eternal Order, A Study of Atonement In Its Cosmic Significance (London and Redhill: Lutterworth Press, 1943), pp. 110-167.

sight of all through the long period of Greek and Latin theology; and, even in modern times, except for the stress put upon the conception of "Christ as Head of the Race" by a few British theologians of the nineteenth century (Erskine of Linlathen, McLeod Campbell, and F. D. Maurice), no one had yet come forward with a convincing statement regarding the Pauline correlation of Creation and Redemption. "Verily Paul's synthesis remained at the end of the days far, very far away."[1] It is indeed strange that P. T. Forsyth's contribution is overlooked in this survey of thought. Although he is quoted three times in Clark's work, there is no recognition of his effort to restore the Christus Creator: Christus Redemptor synthesis. Yet Forsyth's Christological thought moves strongly in this direction:

> Is the Kingdom of God the consummation of creation? Then surely the Saviour and King of the Kingdom must be one with the Creator of creation. The world which was made for such a Christ must have been made by Him. The largest conception of creation is much more than cosmic in range: it is also redemptive in power. It thinks of the cosmos as the arena or the base of God's salvation. The ground plan of creation -- what is it if it be not found in the final plan of salvation? Has creation any ground plan else? . . . The goal to which the whole creation moves -- is it not that Eternal Redemption? . . . The whole cosmos is great with the redeemed Kingdom. But if so, surely then the Kingdom's

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1. Clark, The Cross and the Eternal Order, p. 139.

> Saviour and King is Creation's Maker and Humanity's God.[1]

This was the conviction that combined faith and logic brought to the apostle Paul. "He [Paul] worked back from the faith that all things were made for Christ to the conviction that, as the end was in the beginning, all things were made by Christ."[2] Furthermore, in the whole New Testament witness, "His death and resurrection made the greatest thing His great historic and cosmic Person did."[3] Through the ministry of the Holy Spirit this greatest work of the cosmic Christ becomes effectual in the life of man. "The Lord the Spirit, by the Word of the Gospel, makes the person of Christ so near as to be the ever-present revelation and ever-creative redemption by God."[4]

If redemption is creation's plan, then a "cosmic" redemption must be in that plan. "The soul's Redeemer was the soul's Creator divested of everything but the holy love in which he created, and raised by the deep and long renunciation to a power in which lies the salvation for ever and ever of the whole created race and world."[5]

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. pp. 325-326. Cf. F., The Justification of God, p. 219f.
2. Ibid., p. 269.
3. F., This Life and the Next, p. 123.
4. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 116.
5. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 353. Cf.

Other thoughts follow in natural sequence: "Such a relation between Christ and other men carries us, as soon as we reflect and ask about it, into a Christ supra-historic, supra-human, and pre-mundane."[1] Forsyth then brings his Christus Creator: Christus Redemptor view to a climactic conclusion. "It is only the Christ of the New Creation that can be the Christ of a complete Weltanschauung, and wear the crown of a new world wherein dwelleth the righteousness of a holy God."[2]

(3) Kenosis: The Self-emptying

Once the pre-existence of Christ has been granted as a postulate of Christian faith, Forsyth believes that it is not possible to continue a fruitful Christological discussion without employing some theory of kenosis, or "divine self-emptying" as he calls it in his sermon on Philippians 2:5-8.

> If there was a personal pre-existence in the case of Christ it does not seem possible to adjust it to the historic Jesus without some doctrine of Kenosis. We face in Christ a God-head self-reduced

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F., "Revelation and the Bible," The Hibbert Journal (October, 1911), p. 241: "If God's treatment of us be redemption . . . its content is the living, loving, saving God; its compass is cosmic."

1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 355f.
2. Ibid., p. 356.

> but real, whose infinite power took effect in self-humiliation, whose strength was perfected in weakness, who consented not to know with an ignorance divinely wise, and who emptied Himself in virtue of His divine fulness.[1]

While he is aware of the difficulties that have always appeared in conjunction with kenotic theorizing, Forsyth believes that the main problems arise unnecessarily. They come up because kenoticists persist in trying to spell out some exact answer to the question how God should become Christ rather than in concentrating on the fact that He did become Christ. The former concern relates to theological science, while the latter has to do with religious faith. And in Forsyth's judgment, "the science of it can wait, but the religion of it cannot."[2] He thus indicates his intention to reverse the priority in his own labours looking toward the resolution of the great paradox that "God was in Christ."

Before any explanation of Forsyth's theory is attempted it should be pointed out that he does indeed have a different approach to the problem of the Person of Jesus Christ than that of previous kenoticists such as A. M. Fairbairn, D. W. Forrest, or even Charles Gore to whose

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 293-294.

2. Ibid., p. 294.

thought his theory is said to bear a resemblance.[1] Instead of formulating a linear equation by inductive, empirical methods, the solution to which is the Kenotic Theory, Forsyth sees the Theory as a logical, necessary deduction from the existential situation which is the result of Christ's redemptive act. Thus any exposition must begin not with a theological conviction or metaphysic but with positive, personal religious experience of Him. As has been shown, Forsyth maintains that this experience implies and necessitates the pre-existence of Christ, which in turn makes it necessary to deal with the fact that the heavenly Christ laid aside His glory and the earthly Christ underwent humiliation. Surely then some kind of kenosis is involved, but a true conception of the kenotic process is of one which --

> does not think of the divine self-consciousness as going out of existence, but only of its retraction, concentration, or occultation, in one constituent of the Godhead. The suicide of God is no part of

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1. W. L. Bradley in P. T. Forsyth: The Man and His Work says of Forsyth's kenotic doctrine, "There is . . . an affinity to Gore" (p. 94). Actually such an affinity is rather tenuous since the two theologians represent two different types of Kenotic Theory. According to the scheme worked out by A. B. Bruce (The Humiliation of Christ, p. 179), Gore's theory would be labeled "Real but Relative" while Forsyth's would be called "Real but Potential." There is far too much originality in the latter's thinking for him to have been very heavily indebted to any previous thinker.

> the kenotic idea, which turns but on self-divestment as a moral power of the eternal Son; who retains His consciousness but renounces the conditions of infinity in its procreate form.[1]

It must be readily admitted that there is certainly no "scientific" answer to the question of "how a divine consciousness could reduce its own consciousness by volition."[2] One would have to be God Himself to be privy to such knowledge. Yet Forsyth feels it may be possible to throw some light -- even though faint -- upon the matter from the "lamp" of human analogy.[3] In fact, he adduces four

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 295f.

2. Ibid., p. 294f.

3. Ibid., pp. 296-299. To those who object that such an attempt to depict the ways of deity in human terms is ridiculous and doomed to failure it can only be replied that a human being has no sensible alternative but to think and speak of God "anthropomorphically," This is the very best that the thinker can do if he is to avoid meaningless abstractions. After all, this is the same language employed by the New Testament writers themselves in their endeavour to explain and give expression to their faith in God. Analogy would seem to be a perfectly legitimate way of giving form to metaphysical thinking. Indeed Miss Dorothy M. Emmett: The Nature of Metaphysical Thinking, (Macmillan & Co., Ltd: London, 1953) denies that to call God "Father" is to speak anthropologically. The term is used, she affirms, to illustrate the relation of dependence that obtains between creature and Creator (q.v. p. 180). Analogy may therefore be freely used in the human effort to picture infinite things, provided the analogy employed is appropriate to the relationship described.

analogies from the plane of human existence to show how a voluntary contraction of consciousness might be conceivable. The following seems to be the most persuasive, logically speaking: Consider the case of a brilliant university student who has special aptitude in philosophy and who finds exceeding joy in this study. However, his father dies and, at the behest of filial duty, it devolves upon this young man to turn his back on his beloved field of interest and devote himself to a career in business that is at utter variance with all that went with his intellectual pursuits and philosophical inclinations. Due to the necessary absorption in the pressing affairs and conflicting demands of the workaday world, by and by he ceases to remember much of what he once delighted in knowing. The joy of philosophical thinking is only his in poignant and nostalgic retrospect. And Forsyth now inquires:

> Is this not a case where a moral and sympathetic volition leads to a certain contraction of the consciousness; not indeed by a single violent and direct act of will, but by a decision whose effect is the same when it is spread over a life? . . . In applying the illustration to the theology of a kenosis in Eternity, where a thousand years are but as one day, the element of time between choice and result in the earthly case is negligible.[1]

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 298-299.

From the best of motives the subject of this parable imposes upon himself a drastic self-limitation. Forsyth's point is that this happens -- has happened -- and is the consequence neither of a spiritual process or of a forced martyrdom, but of a resolve made willingly and clearly in the full knowledge of all it entails. The inference is, if this is possible with us frail mortals, how much more might it be possible for holy loving God in the person of His Son to limit His divine capabilities to a degree beyond the bounds of any human analogy.

> Just because He was holy God, the Son would be morally capable of a self-dispowering more complete than anything that could be described by human analogy. As God, the Son in His freedom would have a kenotic power over Himself corresponding to the infinite power of self-determination which belongs to deity.[1]

No one can tell what it cost the brilliant young university student to forego his congenial pursuits and stifle his intellectual powers, and who can tell how costly it was for One who had all the riches of eternal glory in His possession to become poor for our sakes that we through His poverty might become rich? Moreover, the sacrifice is all the greater when it is in no way exacted but is made as a positive moral act of will.

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 300.

Forsyth's insistence on the interpretation of kenosis as a reduction from actuality to potentiality is a very important point in his thinking. It is in this respect that he becomes creative and original in his Christological thought to the most marked and impressive degree. This is where he makes a positive contribution to "Kenotic" description of the Person of Jesus Christ. To explain again: The attributes of God when they are "kenoticized" are not destroyed but concentrated. "The self-reduction, or self retraction, of God might be a better phrase than the self-emptying."[1] He finds no difficulty in ascribing such an ability to Deity. It was because Christ was God that He could divest Himself temporarily of some of His powers. "He could not have emptied Himself but for His Godhead."[2] Under the impetus of holy Love God enters dynamically and purposefully into a complete creaturehood in which His attributes are latent or potential rather than actual. It is thus that the divine integrity is maintained even as God becomes true man.

Accepting what he calls "the principle of Christian

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 308.
2. F., God the Holy Father, p. 33.

theism" that infinitum capax finiti, Forsyth goes on to say that: "Omnipotence means not that God should be able to do anything that fancy may suggest; but that, in working his will of love, God is, from His own free resource, equal to all it involves."[1] Of omnipresence he declares: "Omnipresence . . . means that God is not hampered by space, but can enter spatial relations without being tied by them, can exist in limits without being unfree or ceasing to be God."[2] Concerning what happens to the attribute of omniscience (a point that is often debated most vigorously by both proponents and opponents of Kenoticism) Forsyth is more explanatory: "In its eternal form, it is an intuitive and simultaneous knowledge of all things; but when the Eternal enters time it becomes a discursive and successive knowledge, with the power to know all things only potential, and enlarging to become actual under the moral conditions that govern human growth and the extension of human knowledge."[3] It is thus that the so-called "relative" attributes are brought under the

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 309. Cf. Ibid., p. 313. See also F., God the Holy Father, p. 35.

2. Ibidem.

3. Ibid., p. 307f. Cf. Ibid., p. 310.

governance of the theistic principle to which this kenotic theologian adheres, namely, Infinitum capax finiti, which means that:"If the infinite God was so constituted that He could not live also as a finite man, then He was not infinite."[1]

According to Forsyth, an attribute of God is "only the Being Himself in a certain angle and relation."[2] Therefore it is not really possible to speak of the surrender or renunciation of any of the divine attributes. "Instead of speaking of certain attributes as renounced may we not speak of a new mode of their being?"[3] However, when Forsyth suggests this terminology for the Incarnation, he is not asserting the historic modalist position, i. e. that Christ was the sole self-expression of God during the Incarnation phase.

> The divine energy was concentrated for the special work to be done. The fulness of the Son's Godhead

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 315.

2. Ibid., p. 309. This should not be confused with Gore's "sphere" or "period" of God's existence which he sets forth in his Dissertations on Subjects Connected With the Incarnation (q.v., p. 94). Though the concepts are superficially similar, there is no idea of "potential" in Gore's theory.

3. Ibid., p. 307.

> was still the essence of Christ. That Godhead lost nothing in the saving act. It took the whole power of Godhead to save; it was not the Son's work alone; far less was it the work of any impaired Son.[1]

By this viewpoint Forsyth seeks to avoid the charge of tending either to Tritheism or to Modalism.

Having devised a kenotic scheme that escapes the intolerable consequence of the "suicide of God", that in fact affirms His complete deity in becoming man, Forsyth is forthwith confronted with another serious problem. Could such a God be genuinely incarnate and, in all respects, representative of man? This problem comes to a focus in the so-called "sinlessness" of Jesus Christ. Here the question arises: Could He sin or even be tempted to sin? If this question is answered negatively in both its parts, how then is the sinless and untemptable character of Christ to be reconciled with His true humanity? In his zeal to maintain the Deity of Christ the theologian may become docetic in his thought and thus do violence to the concept of His being vere homo.

Forsyth does not hesitate to say that Christ was free from sin and that the limit of non potuit peccare bounds this sinlessness. But the temptable conditions

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 319.

were there which related Him in a real way to the moral struggle and conflict of humanity. He was indeed tempted in all points as other men, yet He could not sin. And now Forsyth brings another analogy to his aid: "I could remind you how possible it is for you to steal some article from a shop on your way home, and yet how impossible. You could, but you simply could not."[1] The phrase "simply could not" denotes the moral imperative in contrast to the metaphysical possibility of the first "could." So, Christ "could" sin, but He "simply could not." That which was for Him metaphysically possible was at the same time ethically impossible. Christ was sinless, not that He did not feel the lure of sin, but that He did not yield to its appeal. Forsyth goes on to explain that "what is truly human is not sin, but the power to be tempted to sin."[2] This helps to clear the way for a view of Christ that keeps His humanity and His deity in unimpaired balance. "Because Christ was true man He could be truly tempted; because He was true God He could not truly sin; but He was not less true man for that."[3] What

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 301.
2. Ibid., p. 302.
3. Ibidem.

Forsyth seems to mean is that with Christ there was never any will to sin, but that nevertheless He could feel the attractive power of temptation. The potentialities of His Person did not include sin but did include temptation, and Forsyth elucidates as follows:

> Among all His potentialities that of sin was not there; because potentiality is only actuality powerfully condensed; and had potential sin been there its actuality would have been but a matter of time and trial. But temptation was potential; and it became actual in due course. He could be tempted because He loved; He could not sin because He loved so deeply, widely, infinitely, holily, because it was God He loved -- God more than man.[1]

It is not easy to follow the thought of this subtle theologian when he describes the type of temptation to which Christ was peculiarly susceptible:

> The only temptation with real power for Him was a temptation to good -- to inferior forms of good. It was not the temptation to forsake the righteousness of God, but to seek it by other paths, less moral and less patient paths, than God's highway of the holy cross.[2]

This surely is giving an unusually wide interpretation to the word "temptation" which has reference generally to wrong choice. To speak of being tempted only to good would seem to detract seriously from the true humanity of Jesus and to take away the God of Christian faith who is

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 302-303.

2. Ibid., p. 303.

"not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sinning" (Hebrews 4:15 RSV). If Forsyth can be understood to mean by "inferior forms of good" some kind of second-best choice made in preference to the best, then the temptation to choose the second best rather than the best, which has the prior claim, would seem to be a temptation to evil. It was this sort of temptation to which Jesus was subjected in the wilderness trials and which He steadfastly resisted as having their source in Satan himself. In any case, Forsyth does not intentionally betray any inconsistency in his thought, for he holds that because Christ was true man He could be truly tempted, yet without sin.

Returning to the subject of the divine omniscience and its reduction in the Person of Jesus Christ, Forsyth says:

> By His own will God in Christ reduced His intelligence from being actual to being potential, within the kingdom of power or nature; while from that potentiality, as Christ grew in grace, it developed and regained actual omniscience by living it back, by the moral way of the kingdom of grace, till He left the world behind, to be determined as the Son of God in power.[1]

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 316. Forsyth here gives the impression that the self-reduction of attributes only involved the divine omniscience.

This statement points to another significant aspect of Forsyth's Christological thought. He believes that all of the reduced attributes must be restored to their original actuality. This is done by what he calls the movement of "Plerosis" which he proposes as a counter-balance to the movement of Kenosis. Apart from the concept of Plerosis his view of the Person of Christ cannot be fully understood.

(4) Plerosis: The Self-fulfilment

Even while he is developing his thoughts on the divine self-limitation with impressive singleness of purpose, Forsyth lets it be known that he has in mind a compensatory idea. Thus, in the midst of the chapter on "The Kenosis or Self-emptying of Christ" he declares:

> The diminuendo of the Kenosis went on parallel with the crescendo of a vaster Plerosis. He died to live. And His post-resurrection power is other in form than that of His earthly life. The form of a servant gives place again to the form of God.[1]

To look at only the negative side of the experience of Christ in the Incarnation, as kenotic theorisers usually do, is to stop at the half-way mark and be left with the "spectacle of a humbled God" by a view which does not take

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 311.

account "of a redeeming and royal God."[1] Forsyth explains the corrective that he would offer for this one-sidedness:

> We must keep in view, and keep uppermost, the more positive process, the effective, ascending and mastering process which went alongside of the renunciation in Christ, nay, was interwoven with it, as its ruling coefficient. I mean that, besides the subjective renunciation, we must note the growth, the exaltation, of His objective achievement, culminating in the perfecting at once of His soul and our salvation in the cross, resurrection and glory. I should not decline to speak carefully of a progressive incarnation.[2]

Forsyth is determined that his idea of a "progressive incarnation" will not be misinterpreted, as could so easily be done. Caution is indeed the order of the day. For him the concept does not mean in the slightest degree that Jesus was a man who gradually became God. No such metamorphosis was possible to one who was already divine.

> Christ worked out the salvation He was. . . . He was exercised unto the godliness He brought with Him. The deepening of His faithfulness was the emergence of His deity. He was not acquiring deity, He was unfolding it.[3]

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 329. Cf. Ibid., p. 349: "Alongside the Kenosis and its negations there went a corresponding Plerosis, without which the Kenosis is a one-sided idea."

2. Ibid., pp. 329-330.

3. Ibid., p. 350. Cf. F., Religion in Recent Art, p. 197: "He grew not to God but in God."

By such asseverations is the deity of Christ maintained, whole, intact and unimpaired.

In Forsyth's approach to an understanding of the Incarnation it is no more desirable to think of two natures of Christ than it was in time past to think of two persons or two consciousnesses. None of these ways of thinking of Him does any justice to the interest of salvation, which he conceived as a communion of persons and not as the deification of man. He therefore sets down an alternative italicised proposal: "It might be better to describe the union of God and man in Christ as the mutual involution of two personal movements raised to the whole scale of the human soul and the divine."[1]

Forsyth realizes that it will be no easy matter to expound such a doctrine of the Person of Christ. To assist him in this enterprise he turns to the spiritual history of mankind in which a two-fold movement can be seen at work. "I allude . . . to the vertical action, so to say, in which man is constantly seeking unto a God and God is constantly passing into man."[2] These movements can be exemplified in prayer and the answer to prayer, in

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 333.
2. Ibid., p. 334.

evolution and inspiration. "And they give us the categories in which God and man meet."[1] Furthermore, "they meet in action rather than in being; and the unity of being is just such as is required for mutual action and communion."[2] By such illustrations and by vivid imagery Forsyth tries mightily to extablish his position that --

> In Christ's life and work we have that divine mobility . . . that coming . . . to be what He always vitally was, by what I have called a process of redintegration. He moved by His history to a supernal world that He moved in by His nature. . . . On the one side we have a personality originally existing under those spiritual and discarnate conditions . . . taking the form and conditions of a corporeal life, in order to be the arena and the organ of God's revelation and man's redemption. . . . And, on the other side, we have Him growing in this corporeal personality, this increate but creaturely life. . . . We have His divine mobility, therefore, translated into human growth. We have together within one historic life the gradual descent and the growing ascent, by a moral process in each case.[3]

All of which is to say in brief compass that "Christ . . . embodies the two movements of spiritual reality in which man and God meet."[4]

It becomes apparent that "growth" is a very im-

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 336.
2. Ibidem.
3. Ibid., pp. 338-339.
4. Ibid., p. 339.

portant element in Forsyth's concept of Plerosis. And it is undoubtedly true that Christ did "grow" in a number of ways. It would also seem to be true that all forms of His growth and development, all that is involved in the unfolding of His unique vocation, fall within the bounds of His finitude and are therefore the affirmation and not the renunciation of His Incarnation. But Forsyth wants all of these things (embraced in his idea of Plerosis) to be considered as falling within the bounds of His infinitude. The progressive development of Jesus is thus represented as the "undoing" of His Incarnation. This thought extends even to His death on the Cross and goes counter to the teaching of Paul in Philippians 2:8 where the Apostle says of Christ Jesus ". . . and became obedient unto death", thus making this event the climax of the kenosis rather than its nullification. On the other hand, Forsyth clearly indicates that what he would like to do is to represent the Cross as both the "nadir of that self-limitation which flowed from the supramundane self-emptying of the Son" and "the zenith of that moral exaltation which had been mounting throughout the long sacrifice of His earthly life."[1]

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 232.

Acknowledging the rational difficulty inherent in such a concept as "conjunction of natures," Forsyth again firmly asserts that "it is only in the alogical unity of a person for whose action and growth they are necessary that we find the harmony of several antinomies that defy rational adjustment."[1] In spite of the obscurity which must always partially invest such a subject, he believes that through his explication, with its emphasis on the dynamic and the moral in a view that constructively employs Kenotic theory he has been able to show:

> What we have in Christ . . . is more than the coexistence of two natures, or even their interpenetration. We have within this single increate person the mutual involution of two personal acts or movements supreme in spiritual being, the one distinctive of man, the other distinctive of God; the one actively productive from the side of Eternal God, the other actively receptive from the side of growing man; the one being the pointing, in a corporeal person, of God's long action in entering history, the other the pointing of man's moral growth in the growing appropriation by Jesus of His divine content as He becomes a fuller organ for God's full action on man. The two supreme movements of spiritual being, redemption and religion, are revealed as being so personal that they can take harmonious, complete and final effect within one historic person, increate but corporeal.[2]

In and through the Kenosis and the Plerosis is the achieve-

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1. F. The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 345.
2. Ibid., pp. 343-344.

ment of the divine objective of the whole reciprocal process. "The growing involution of those two movements of descent and ascent was the procession also of the reconciliation of God and the world."[1] The moral and dynamic unity of the Person of Christ has a soteriological basis. "It is the work of Christ that gives us the key to the nature of Christ."[2]

(5) The Relation of Jesus Christ to God

The relation of Jesus Christ to God in the thought of P. T. Forsyth should be viewed in the light of his definition of the article of belief in Christ's deity. He defines it as "the theological expression of the evangelical experience of His salvation, apart from which it is little less than absurd, and . . . incredible."[3] This experience always has a compulsive "Christological" effect upon believers. "We are . . . driven, by the real existence of an Eternal Father and our experience of His grace, to demand the existence of an equally real eternal Son -- both being equally personal and divine."[4] A

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 350.
2. Ibid., p. 346.
3. Ibid., p. 74.
4. Ibid., p. 282f.

crucial query then arises: "The question, then, is what is the relation between the Godhead of the Eternal Son and the man Jesus Christ, and how did it come to pass."[1] From the pages of the history of Christian dogma Forsyth draws three notable interpretations of the Person of Christ which suggest three answers to the question of His relationship to the Father. These are: "the Ebionite (or Socinian), the Arian, and the Athanasian."[2] The Socinian estimate of Christ establishes him on the human level as one who has been created by God. "Like us, He is only created ad hoc, for a special function, and as a special organ of the Holy Spirit."[3] This view has great appeal to the theologically naive mind in that it represents "what is true enough if it be not called final."[4] At certain times and under certain circumstances Socinianism becomes especially attractive to the pro-ethicist and/or anti-supernaturalist type of religious mind.

> Socinianism is a very natural concomitant of an age like the Reformation, or our own, when a new ethical departure is correcting many of the abuses and corruptions of the religious life, and joining with science to criticize the true supernatural out of the historic record or the personal experience.[5]

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 383.
2. Ibid., p. 76.
3. Ibid., p. 78.
4. Ibid., p. 76.
5. F., "Revelation and the Person of Christ," op. cit., p. 133.

The system thus allows for a moral emphasis and at the same time reduces the stone of offence of supernaturalism to a mere pebble -- or removes it altogether. If the Christian faith were a matter of having a lowest common denominator, this position would be it. Nevertheless, the Socinian estimate of Christ must be rejected as inferior to the grand elevation of the New Testament witness to Him and His work, and to His relationship to God.

Next to be considered is the Arian view which occupies a middle position in the Christological scheme. The nature of Christ is beyond the reach of man's highest aspiration and yet it cannot be equated with the nature of God.

> He [Christ] is a secondary God. So that our highest possible development of human communion with God could never reach that of Christ. Yet He is not of one nature with God. He is a creation -- an intermediary creation. If He is not of Humanity, neither is He of deity.[1]

On the formal side the theology of the New Testament gives a considerable degree of credence to Arianism and Forsyth points out several supporting texts in making this admission. However, these and other passages of Scripture belong to an initial and tentative way of regarding the

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 79.

person of Christ and do not provide a legitimate stopping-place for mature Christological thought.

> It is one thing to see but an Arian Christ while the theology of the Gospel was in the making. It is another thing to stand arrested there and denounce an Athanasian Christ now that the providence of the Spirit has revealed, in the tremendous experience of the historic Church, a Gospel which is possible on that profound base alone.[1]

So, as has been intimated, it is the Athanasian concept of Christ which is to be preferred over the Socinian and Arian estimates. "Christ is too great for any smaller answer. For greatness is in the nature of Athanasianism."[2] Forsyth even confidently predicts that the greatest Christological thought will perennially relate to these spacious bounds of creedal reference.

> The passion for amplitude and plerophory to the measure of Christ will always send the human mind to some form of Athanasianism, with such metaphysic, whether in the Bible or not, as makes that answer possible, according to the state of contemporary thought at any specified time.[3]

It is here and here alone that the inadequacies of Socinianism and Arianism can be made up. In these two systems Christ, in His relationship to the Father, appears respectively as "God's <u>prophet</u>" and "God's <u>plenipotentiary</u>",

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1. F., <u>The Person and Place of Jesus Christ</u>, p. 82.
2. Ibid., p. 84.
3. Ibid., p. 84f.

while the ultimate need is to find in Him "God's real presence."[1]

It is within the ample and congenial framework of Athanasianism that Forsyth develops his own Christological thought in which Christ is related to God in the most complete and intimate way. It is with the insight and in the spirit of the great Church Father of the fourth century that this theologian of the twentieth century views the Person of Jesus Christ. No estimate of Him is high enough in any stage or age of Christian thought that stops short of seeing in Him, as Athanasius saw in Him, "the supernal man, the Lord from heaven."[2] According to Forsyth, the crucial question for the Church in modern times is:

> . . . whether in Christ God sent or went into the world; whether in Christ He announced Himself or gave Himself; whether Jesus, who spoke in God's name, really stood in God's place, where the first Church, by its worship of Him, put Him.[3]

In each case it is the second alternative that must be declared and maintained. It is true conformity to Scripture and to the Athanasian viewpoint to say that the redemptive action of Christ was the redemptive action of

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 83.
2. Ibidem.
3. Ibid., p. 84.

God. "It was the sublime act of Christ's will and God's will combined, of Son and Father ever one."[1]

Forsyth believes that there is a unique relationship between Christ and God. It is one of election and not of creation.

> In The Old Testament as in the New Testament the son is no created being, but a chosen. Israel in the Old Testament, and Christ in the New, are the Sons of God by His election and not by His creation. Christ is increate. . . . God is, directly, the Father of Christ alone. He is our Father only in Christ. God has but one Son; the many sons are sons in Him; and He is Son in none.[2]

When, as some thinkers do, Christ is related to the Father as the realization of the divine idea the effect is totally reductive. "If you reduce the Eternal Sonship to an idea you will reduce the Eternal Fatherhood to the same tenuity."[3] To think of the Son of God as the realization of the divine purpose is an improvement in that "it brings Christ into immediate relation with God's will and action rather than with His thought."[4] However, this view is also

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1. F., God the Holy Father, p. 40

2. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 147. Cf. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 113: "There was an election of men by Christ as of Christ by God."

3. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 286.

4. Ibidem.

inadequate. While it makes Christ the "supreme object of the divine election", it does not make Him "the eternal object of an eternal election."[1] To impute to Jesus Christ an acquired Godhead, which seems to be the only Christological alternative when kenosis is rejected as an untenable theory, means that "we then have a progressive incarnation of God and a progressive deification of man in a rising scale of mutual involution; which requires some form of adoptionism."[2] This is really to deprive Christ of any Godhead at all, and is fundamentally a contradiction. "No creature could become God."[3] Adoptionism is, for Forsyth, quite beyond the pale of serious theological consideration and he explains why:

> No . . . Adoptionist Messiah could cope with the devilry revealed in . . . the moral convulsion of a world with no resource but war. He could not deliver a single soul from the racial evil which infects it.[4]

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 286. Forsyth makes the further critical comment: "He has no personal pre-existence."

2. Ibid., p. 232.

3. Ibid., p. 294.

4. F., The Justification of God, p. 31f. Forsyth was writing during the bitter raging of the First World War, but his sense of the inadequacy of an "Adoptionist Messiah" would have been just as strong under any other circumstances. This perceptive theologian was under no illusions about human nature.

Therefore, as he sees it, there is only one recourse, only one way of looking at Christ in relation to Eternal God.

> We are driven back to before the foundation of the world -- to a Redeemer who was there, who is deeper and older than His human nature, whose redemption of the world is only possible because of His part in its creation, who took the responsibility of creating because He knew He possessed the power to redeem and retrieve whatever creation might come to. No created being could save the creation.[1]

The only true and adequate interpretation of Christ is that which regards Him as the Son who is co-existent with the Eternal Father.

In the relationship of the pre-existent Christ, the Eternal Son, to God the Eternal Father, Forsyth does not hesitate to affirm the subordination of the Son. "Of course the Son must be subordinate to the Father, though both are in the same Divine form or family."[2] The correct interpretation of Philippians 2:6 is that --

> Christ as Son . . . did not aspire to equality of power or knowledge [with God] , but to obedience. And so He kept and enhanced that glory which He had with the Father before the world was. . . . There is place and order in the Godhead, and He kept it.[3]

Subordination should not be looked upon as demeaning but

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1. F., The Justification of God, p. 32.
2. F., God the Holy Father, p. 42.
3. Ibidem.

as exalting. At least this is true of the Athanasian view of Christ as opposed to the Arian. In Arianism "His subordination is that of a creature. . . . And it carried with it inferiority."[1] However, it is quite otherwise in Trinitarian Doctrine.

> Subordination is not inferiority, and it is godlike. The principle is embedded in the very cohesion of the Eternal Trinity . . . It is not a mark of inferiority to be subordinate, to have an authority, to obey. It is Divine.[2]

As in the relationships of the human family -- young people to their elders and woman to man -- there is, as Forsyth sees it, a certain subordination that enhances personality rather than detracts from it, so also in the "family" of the Trinity the same principle obtains. Forsyth thus relates his view of the subordination of the Son to the Father to the Godhead, or the deity of Jesus Christ, rather than to His humanity.

There is of course a difference between Christ the Son in heaven and Christ the Son on earth which derives from the humanity of Jesus:

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 79.

2. F., God the Holy Father, p. 42. Here and elsewhere in his writings Forsyth appears to be remarkably knowledgeable of the constitution of the Trinity. Cf. F., "Christ and the Christian Principle," London Theological Studies (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1911), pp. 164-165.

> There was that in the earthly personality of Christ which in the heavenly could not be. For instance, in the earthly personality there was growth; in the heavenly there could be none. . . . The growth of a divine personality in eternity is a much more impossible thing than the co-existence of three.[1]

A word of warning is therefore in order: "Amid all that we recognise in Him of human conditions and human growth . . . we shall be most careful to note that any growth in His sense of Godhead was not the growth or acquisition of that Godhead itself."[2] There is a distinct difference between Christ the Mediator, as He is often called by Forsyth, and the Father-God. To disregard this difference means to lose the real significance of the Person of Christ and to render unintelligible the divine plan of Redemption. Yet to insist on this distinction is to move toward a tritheistic viewpoint. The only way to avoid this danger is by thinking in qualitative rather than in quantitative terms. The relationship of Jesus Christ to God must always be considered in terms of personality rather than "substance" to avoid serious theological complications and confusion. By adhering to this procedure there is no splitting up of the Godhead into separate units as would otherwise be the case.

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 284.
2. Ibid., p. 353.

(6) The Resurrection and the Living Lord

It is Forsyth's contention that the Cross "was the Father's first gift and great grace to the Son; the Resurrection was but the second."[1] Moreover, "it was Pentecost and not the Resurrection that enthroned Him in the majesty which to Christian thought He has inhabited ever since."[2] While he thus downgrades the Resurrection qua Resurrection, Forsyth more than compensates for this slight by the stress which he places on the reality of the living Lord. "The same Jesus who died also rose, and lives as the King of heavenly glory and Lord of human destiny."[3] His reality is made self-evident as He works in and through the personal experience of believers. The presence of the living Christ is far more important to Christian faith than any miraculous rising from the dead, and Forsyth sees the physical conditions of Christ's Resurrection as having a secondary significance. "The

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1. F., Missions in State and Church, p. 28.

2. F., Religion in Recent Art, p. 82.

3. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 174. Cf. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 300: "He achieves the plerosis in resurrection and ascension." This is one of Forsyth's rare references to the Ascension and the statement is somewhat at variance with his earlier intimation that the Cross was the zenith of the Plerosis.

empty tomb I would leave a question as open as the Virgin Birth . . . God could prepare, and Christ could take, for His purposes a body as it pleased Him."[1] The historicity of the Resurrection has value only for faith, not for unfaith. And Forsyth makes the incisive comment:

> It is worth little as a weapon against the skeptic compared with its worth as a seal to the believer. Its force as a converting agent is but secondary. It is not for the world, but for the Church. It is not a condition of faith, but credible only to faith. It was believers who first believed it. This is an old sneer. We can only confound the enemy by accepting it, and extract the sting by glorying in the fact.[2]

It is a mistake to treat the Resurrection as a proof of Christ's divine power instead of its exercise. The day is past for building faith by appealing to the merely miraculous. Christ was no thaumaturgist, coercing faith by working wonders. Nevertheless, while the Resurrection of Christ is not evidential, it is surely most real. This is the testimony that comes from the long past:

> The apostles did not critically examine the evidence for the resurrection; they hailed the risen Lord. It was not a resurrection that impressed them, but a returned Saviour. The matter of the moment is the reality of the risen Lord, the

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1. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, pp. 174-175. Cf. F., The Cruciality of the Cross, p. 87.

2. F., "Revelation and the Person of Christ," op. cit., p. 136.

> identity of the Christ now in heaven with the Jesus of the finished victory on the Cross. The great thing is the power given to believers to say and feel with real meaning that they are in Christ and Christ in them.[1]

To those who are uneasy about the vitality of their Christian faith Forsyth throws out a challenge:

> Realize a living Christ and He will produce in you a living faith. Visit His holy sepulchre in Scripture, and as you pore and wait He will surprise you from behind with His immortal life. A living faith, a living Christianity, a living Christendom, means a living Christ.[2]

Forsyth believes that just as Adam was the first potential man, Jesus is the first actual and victorious man, the One who died and lived again and who is alive forevermore. In so doing He recapitulated in Himself the actual making of a man from the beginning. Therefore Christ is the summary and the ultimate of human and divine nature. Forsyth also understands the Resurrection of Jesus Christ as forecast. The Pauline teaching of dying and rising with Christ is an experience both for individuals and for society. Individual life as victorious and eternal and the Kingdom of God as victorious and eternal were forecast in the event of the Resurrection. As the matter now stands: "We see not

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1. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 175.
2. F., God the Holy Father, p. 88.

yet all things put under righteousness, but we see Jesus already crowned with that glory and honour."[1]

ii. The Concept of the Humanity of Jesus Christ

In considering this aspect of Forsyth's thought it should be observed that he is writing in reaction to the "Jesus of History" trend in Christology. He therefore assumes that many of the common assertions about the manhood of Christ are known and accepted by the reader. "We have no call today to prove the real manhood of Jesus. For that is universally owned; and it is all that many can own."[2] It is not surprising then to find that the humanity of the Son of God qua humanity is given brief treatment in Forsyth's discussion. There are however certain angles of Christ's life as man on earth that do merit and receive his earnest attention, and these will now be taken up.

(1) The Self-consciousness of Jesus Christ

In his answer to the question whether "Jesus was in His own doctrine of God in His supreme revelation of God as Father,"[3] Forsyth turns to the text to which he

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1. F., The Justification of God, p. 219.
2. F., The Person and place of Jesus Christ, p. 327f.
3. Ibid., p. 111.

resorts time and again in the course of his Christological construction, namely, Matthew 11:17: "No man knoweth the Son but the Father, neither knoweth any man the Father but by the Son, and he to whom the Son willeth to reveal Him." Upon this passage Forsyth willingly bases his conviction that Jesus consciously believed His Sonship to be of a unique kind, inclusive of His pre-existence.

> He believed and said He was more than a historic servant of God raised for a temporary purpose and then done with. He knew and said He was before the world . . . and that He would outlive the world. . . And such doctrine does not depend on the fourth gospel alone.[1]

Acknowledging the difficulty of adjusting this awareness to other facets of Christ's consciousness, he adds that we cannot suppose that His self-consciousness embraced the later trinitarian categories.

The foregoing views must be understood in relation to Forsyth's concept of the self-emptied Christ as being "a part of the consciousness of God."[2] This he clarifies by interpreting Paul's follow-up of the statement in I Corinthians 2:16: "We have the mind of Christ."

> Paul uses the psychological analogy of our self-consciousness. Man, he says, made in God's image, has the marvellous power of being at once the thinker

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1. F., God the Holy Father, p. 89.

2. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 115.

> and the object of thought, of facing himself, of observing himself, of understanding his own understanding, of reporting on himself. And this because he is a living Spirit. . . . His consciousness is a self-consciousness, which is the only means of our knowing Him. So also God knows Himself -- by His Spirit. Now the Lord Christ is that Spirit. Christ is part of the consciousness of Godhead.[1]

If Jesus "possessed the certainty and communion of the Father in Himself,"[2] then what is to be said about His growth and development to which the Gospel writers bear witness? In answering this question Forsyth concludes that the Synoptics are inadequate in what they report, so he turns to the Epistles. Here there is explicit testimony about the growth of Jesus.

> He grew as Saviour. He developed as Redeemer. . . . He learned a redemptive obedience -- not indeed to acquire its nature, but to unfold its form as the crisis deepened. . . . Not the man Jesus was perfected but the Saviour, not the moral character so much as the work possible only to that character.[3]

What Forsyth finds here is not a process of Incarnation but of Redemption. The apostles do not tell about the perfection of the man Jesus but they testify to "the dynamic development of a Son of God in power which was at last determined in His resurrection."[4] In the process

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 115-116.

2. Ibid., p. 133.

3. Ibid., p. 126.

4. Ibidem.

of Christ's redemptive work which culminated in the Cross and Resurrection He was fulfilling His moral vocation. Forsyth believes the Messianic consciousness of Jesus includes the awareness of Himself as Redeemer, Judge and King. Although He did not say a great deal about His knowledge of being Redeemer, His life and work spoke abundantly of it. In the consciousness of Jesus He was co-eternal with God the Father and was the Eternal Son or "the Humanity eternal in God."[1] His "vast self-consciousness" comprehended also in a very impressive way His sense of finality, upon which is founded the truth of His being not "a revelation of God but the revelation, the final revelation."[2] Forsyth sees nothing in the New Testament or in the thought of Christ to indicate "another coming from God to complete His work."[3] The only thing to follow was the Spirit who applied His work in the lives of believers.

According to Forsyth, Jesus had a constant sense of unity with God in terms of His divine vocation. This was manifested in "a perfect obedience, which is just as divine as perfect authority is."[4] It was the obedience which marked His sense of unity with God which explains why

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 91.
2. Ibid., p. 92.
3. Ibidem.
4. Ibid., p. 94.

Christ in His incarnate life did not exercise more initiative and independence over against the Father.

Forsyth is very sure that "in the Church's history a faith in the God in Christ underlay a faith in the man in Him."[1] And the self-consciousness of Christ was a vital part of this faith in Him as the Son of God and the Son of man.

(2) The Relation of Jesus Christ to Man

When Forsyth deals with the relationship of Jesus Christ to man, he points out that Christ had truly human characteristics like all other men. "The Son of God must be a real man. The people of Nazareth found Him such at least. Whatever made the difference in Him was not perceptible by any of the ordinary faculties of men."[2] His limitation of knowledge and lack of political and aesthetic sympathies were simply the "result of His being the true son of His age and servant of His special vocation."[3] Furthermore, He is a genuinely historic figure in the annals of mankind.

There was such a man. The story of Him is not

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 323.
2. F., Religion in Recent Art, p. 193.
3. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 67.

> an invention. Even if it were conceded that everything told of Him is not literally true. He was a reality. His figure is real and palpable in history. There is a distinct and powerful character among the great figures of the past -- called Jesus, living in a certain land, at a certain time, with certain aims, doctrines, actions, ways of life, and manner of death.[1]

In Forsyth's opinion Christ's oneness with Humanity can be seen in His personality and its development which bear concrete resemblance to that of mankind.

> It should be remembered that human personality is not a ready-made thing, but it has to grow by moral

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1. F., God the Holy Father, p. 84. The sermon on "The Living Christ" from which this quotation is taken holds interesting and convincing evidence that Forsyth did not posit a distinction between the "Jesus of History" and the "Christ of Faith.". He believes that for those who study Jesus Christ as a mere figure in history there is always the possibility -- even probability -- of there coming forth that reverent admiration of Him which is "the prelude of a living faith" (Ibid., p. 87). Of those who are thus affected it can be said that "they have no dead faith. Yet they have not a living faith" (Ibidem). However, no such wanderer between two worlds need fret himself and feel frustrated. "As you pore and wait He will surprise you from behind with His immortal life" (Ibid., p. 88). True faith in a Christ both historic and more than historic then comes into its own. "It is faith in the practical reality of His unseen Person, now living, reigning, guiding from His unseen throne the history and the hearts of men to the Kingdom of God" (Ibid., p. 89). And Forsyth declares that this is "what faith in a historic Christ arrives at when it grows up and comes into its own, when it finds its true self and soul, its meaning and fulness, its wisdom and stature in an eternal light" (Ibidem).

> exercise, and chiefly, in the Kingdom of God by prayer. The living soul has to grow into moral personality. And this should not be ignored in connection with the moral psychology of Christ. He no more than we came into the world with a completed personality -- which would be not so much a miracle but a magic and a prodigy.[1]

It can be further stated that the immediate and perfect relation that Jesus Christ had to God from the very beginning "did not give Him any immunity from the moral law that we must earn our greatest legacies and appropriate by toil and conflict our best gifts."[2] His closeness of connection with Humanity was indeed qualified with respect to His non potuit peccare. "Yet to His own experience the moral conflict was entirely real, because His self-emptying included an oblivion of that impossibility of sin."[3] Thus, if He did not know that He could not sin there was no play-acting involved in His stand against the power of temptation and the forces of evil. While His sinlessness was divine, the struggle that He waged against sin was the bona fide moral engagement of any man and every man.

Forsyth effectively summarizes his understanding of the identification of Christ with Humanity as a whole:

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 340.
2. Ibid., p. 341.
3. Ibidem. Cf. Ibid., p. 301.

> He was all men's creator in a true man's life. And His identity with Humanity lies not in prolonging, as it were, to the sky the rarest matter of the race, but in His own voluntary act of self-identification with it. His identity with man lay in no mere continuity of substance, nor even in participating in personality, but in His assumption of man's conditions of personality, and His renunciation of God's. It lay in His active acceptance of the human and sin-laden conditions of communion with God in such victorious and sinless way as to make that communion possible and real for every other personal soul.[1]

Because of Christ's oneness with Humanity He was able to make His victory over sin and death available to all men, but, on the other hand, His divine ability to be the Redeemer of mankind depends upon His absolute intimacy with Eternal God.

> Unless the Saviour be commensurate with mankind, it is but partial relief. But if He be commensurate with man, He is other than the greatest man. And if He be not the deepest in very God, it is no redemption.[2]

(3) The Uniqueness of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is unique and is so understood by Forsyth. "In Jesus Christ we have one who was conscious of standing in an entirely unique relation to the living God."[3] In the first place Forsyth clarifies the unique-

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 352-353.

2. F., Missions in State and Church, p. 35.

3. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 285.

ness in relation to the divinity of Christ, which is prerequisite to the understanding of His uniqueness in relation to His humanity. The Godhead of Christ means that:

> As the Eternal Son He was the complete and final action of the Holy and gracious love of God our Saviour; that His holy Humanity went up always as an absolute satisfaction and joy to God; that God saw in Him the travail of His Own Soul and was satisfied; that in Christ's historic person God offered Himself in His saving fulness to and for mankind with the omnipotence required for His saving work.[1]

Likewise, Christ is unique with regard to His human nature, as is expounded by Forsyth:

> The essence of Humanity is conscience. It is man's moral relation to a holy God. And Christ's manhood, therefore, consists in the moral reality of His experience, His conflict, and His growth. It means His true ethical personality growing in an actual historic situation. . . . And above all it means that His action arose ethically out of what He was, that His carriage expressed His soul, that His vocation rested on His position, that . . . His manhood was in His perfectly active receptivity. . . . His human person was not the most illustrious of the many spiritual and providential personalities that had appeared on earth from God. It was in its nature exceptional and miraculous.[2]

Differing from other men, Christ brought with Him a soul "bound morally . . . to grow under His life's vocation, to the personality that was the complete and final revelation of God, the agent of man's redemption, and the <u>locus</u> of

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1. F., <u>The Person and Place of Jesus Christ</u>, p. 351.
2. Ibid., pp. 351-352.

man's communion with God."[1] His personality differed from others in that its growth lay "in the unaided and sinless appropriation of that which it already was."[2] Christ's relation to God was perfect and unbroken from the very beginning, and this relation actually constituted His unique personality. Forsyth elucidates:

> He was not a person who became a Son, or was destined to be a son, but His whole personality was absolute sonship. . . . That is not so with us. . . . His person is born of God, ours is created. We are indeed related to a personal God, as His offspring, in a way that necessitates our being persons too. But not such persons. We can reach and develop personality without reference to God; He could not.[3]

Of Jesus Christ it can be said that His work was determined by His personality, while on the strictly human level a man's personality is conditioned by his work. Indeed the work of Christ is to be regarded as identical with His personality. Forsyth continues with his differentiation and reiterates:

> Of no man can it be said that his relation to God constitutes the whole personality. But in the case of Jesus the whole relation to the Father, namely sonship, did constitute that personality.

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 341.

2. Ibidem.

3. Ibid., p. 285. Cf. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 171.

Think it away and nothing is left.[1]

In the thought of P. T. Forsyth it is apparent that Jesus Christ not only has traits and characteristics that are common to humanity, but that He also has others that give evidence of His uniqueness among the sons of men. Because He is both human and more than human He has effected the reconciliation of man to God. Reconciliation is therefore the very essence of the God-man.

3. The Work of Christ

i. Holy God, Sinful Man, and the Centrality of the Cross

In any study of the reconciling work of Jesus Christ two avenues of approach are open to the theologian. He may proceed in his undertaking with man primarily in view, or he may proceed with God primarily in view. Moving against a strongly opposing tide of theological opinion, P. T. Forsyth chose the latter approach. W. L. Bradley aptly delineates his procedure, so much at variance with a prevailing Liberal modus operandi that gave man priority over God:

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 285. The key word in this statement of Forsyth is "whole." Sin is the element contrary to sonship in man, the element which destroys the integrity of his relationship to God. This element, of course, is not present in Christ.

> As he ponders the significance of the work of Christ, he thinks primarily of the relationship of Christ to the Father and of the effect of His work upon God's conscience. What did the Cross mean to God? Did He suffer with Christ? Does He suffer in any way because of man's sin? These are the fundamental issues which concern Forsyth: when they are met, we shall have time to deal with the question of man; but man, the creature, comes after God the Creator.[1]

Defending his manner of treatment which begins with God and works out to man, Forsyth stands fast on experimental grounds. It is only through knowledge of God -- through being known by Him -- that man can know of sin. The conception of the possibility of sin is beyond human comprehension without a theocentric system of thought. "We can never know things at their worst, till we stand where they are at their best."[2] To this strategic position Forsyth points with unwavering finger as he develops the concept of the holy character of God.

The significance of the phrase "the holiness of God" in Forsyth's writings is very important in arriving at an understanding of his Christological thought. While he never set down any clear-cut explication of this basic idea, scattered "definitions" give more than in inkling of that which was written so largely upon the tablet of his

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1. W. L. Bradley, P. T. Forsyth: The Man and His Work, p. 116.

2. F., Religion in Recent Art, p. 247.

mind. In one of his best known books he defines God's holiness in this way:

> The holiness of God is His self-sufficient perfection, whose passion is to establish itself in the unholy by gracious love. Holiness is love morally perfect; love is holiness brimming and overflowing. The perfection speaks in the overflow. It is redemption. Love is perfect, not in amount but in kind, not as intense, but as holy. And holiness is perfect, not as being remote, or as being merely pure, but as it asserts itself in redeeming grace.[1]

It would appear that in the mind of Forsyth one of the most significant aspects of the holiness of God is its assertiveness or activity. Holiness is not a quiescent quality hidden passively away in the deeps of God; rather, it is that in God's nature which identifies Him as the gracious Redeemer of mankind. However, since this element of the definition comes to grips with the actual work of Christ, further expansion of this line of thought must be reserved until later.

It is further apparent that in the thinking of Forsyth the holiness of God has a very close association with the love of God. Indeed it can be said that "the Christian revelation is a God of holy love."[2] Holy love

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1. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 145. Cf. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 6; F., God the Holy Father, p. 26; F., The Cruciality of the Cross, p. 98.

2. F., This Life and the Next, p. 31. As a general rule Forsyth uses the modifier "holy" when he is writing of "love" to emphasize the moral grounding of the latter.

is stern and judging but at the same time is infinitely gracious and compassionate. It is, so to speak, "agape" with added iron in its veins. God's love cannot be separated from the thought of His holiness, for it is holiness that confirms His love and makes it dependable. "If God's love were not essentially holy love, in course of time mankind would cease to respect it, and consequently to trust it."[1]

Holiness is denoted by Forsyth as that which "brings sin home" to man and makes him aware of its offensiveness to God. "To bring sin home, and to bring grace home, we need that something else should come home which alone gives meaning to both -- the holy."[2] The holy God cannot close His eyes to sin, cannot wink at it, cannot comport Himself as though sin had no real existence. God's holi-

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The term "agape" had not yet been popularized in theological circles by the influential historical-theological analysis of Anders Nygren (Agape and Eros, English ed., 1930). Forsyth would have thoroughly agreed with the essential significance of "agape" as the downcoming love of God to unlovable man, but he would have insisted that it includes the idea of the hallowing of God's name through love's selfless bestowal.

1. F., The Work of Christ, p. 113. Cf. F., This Life and the Next, p. 55.

2. F., The Cruciality of the Cross, p. 22.

ness is everlastingly contraposed to man's guilt, and man as guilty must inevitably come under His judgment. "Nothing can arrest the judgment of the Cross, nothing shake the judgment-seat of Christ."[1] "In the Cross grace to sin is one with judgment to wrong."[2] A god of sentimental "love" might forget about judgment, but a God of Holy love can never suspend judgment upon guilty man. He must judge with a thoroughgoing judgment that emphasizes "the sinfulness of sin." However, this judgment that underscores the greatness of the distance between holy God and sinful man is not the last word of the Gospel. The judgment that comes into human affairs is really "the visitation of a Saviour."[3] "The more judgment we see in the Holy Cross the more we see it is judgment unto salvation."[4] It is the holiness of a judging God that makes atonement necessary.

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1. F., The Justification of God, p. 207. A. F. Simpson in an article entitled "P. T. Forsyth: The Prophet of Judgment," The Scottish Journal of Theology (June, 1951), makes the astute comment: "It is impossible to grasp his doctrine of Redemption apart from the persistent stress he lays, in practically all his works, on Judgment" (p. 148).

2. F., "A Rallying Ground for the Free Churches -- the Reality of Grace," The Hibbert Journal (July, 1906), p. 832.

3. F., The Justification of God, p. 189.

4. F., The Soul of Prayer, p. 110.

> It is the holiness of God which makes sin guilt. It is the holiness of God that necessitates the work of Christ, that calls for it, and provides it. . . . The problem is how Christ can be a revelation, not of God's love simply, but of God's holy love. Without a holy God there would be no problem of atonement. It is the holiness of God's love that necessitates the atoning cross.[1]

A corollary of the dictum that "without a holy God there would be no problem of atonement" is, of course, that without the sinfulness of man there would also be no problem of atonement. In the eyes of Forsyth sin is a very evident, very ugly, and utterly divisive factor in the relationship between God and man. Over against the holiness of God stands man in his gross sins. Yet the term "sin" is not usually personal enough to suit the purposes of Forsyth. Sin tends to become a generalization without the individual application that is required. For this reason he often prefers the word "guilt."

> It is the sense of guilt that we have to get back today for the soul's sake and the kingdom's; not simply the sense of sin. There are many who recognize the power of sin, the misfortune of it; what they do not recognize is the thing that makes it most sinful, which makes it what it is before God, namely, guilt; which introduces something noxious and not merely deranged, malignant and not merely hostile; the fact that it is transgression against not simply God, but against a holy God.[2]

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1. F., The Work of Christ, pp. 79-80.

2. Ibid., p. 78. Cf. F., The Principle of Authority, "We must, with stern moral realism, keep central the problem of guilt " (p. 72).

Man may attribute the wrong that is at the core of his being to original sin, thus absolving himself of ultimate responsibility. Not so in the case of guilt. This is a personal thing that strikes through to the heart with dismaying effect. "The last enemy to be destroyed was guilt. . . . I cannot understand how anyone with any sense of judgment can discard the atonement and live without terror."[1] In Forsyth's opinion, it was more precisely guilt than wickedness that prompted the divine invasion of earth's sinful milieu. "What drew Christ to earth (as far as faith's knowledge goes) was the guilt of the world"[2] Sin or guilt -- man is in a sorry plight, regardless of any discriminative use that is made of the terms, and Forsyth does not mince matters in referring to the human situation:

> Between us and the Holy Father there comes what does not come between us and any earthly father -- sin. Sin, hell, curse, and wrath! The wrath and curse of God, not on sin only, but on the soul.[3]

No individual man is ever a sinner in aloofness from his fellows, and throughout his treatment of the Work

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1. F., The Justification of God, p. 221.

2. F., "Ibsen's Treatment of Guilt," The Hibbert Journal (October, 1915), p. 112. But love was still the prior motivator, and Forsyth adds: "It was love at issue with such guilt."

3. F., God the Holy Father, p. 8.

of Christ Forsyth places great emphasis on the "solidary" character of sin. Every single man is a participant in the sin of the race.

> Sin is not an influence which affects but a sectional conscience, or troubles but a few members of the race. In so far as it is real, it affects and vitiates the whole conscience, the whole man, that is, and the whole race in its moral aspect and reliability. That follows from the unit of personality and the race, from our solidarity.[1]

So wide is the "range of wrong" that no one can really conceive how extensive and how terrible it really is. "It is impossible that the whole dimensions and heinousness of wickedness, the abysmal perdition of humanity, should be grasped by any created soul."[2]

Yet for all his graphic representation of the ravages of sin in the individual and corporate life of mankind, Forsyth does not subscribe to the doctrine of the "total depravity" of human nature. With respect to the conscience of unregenerated man to which God comes redemptively in Jesus Christ, he makes this observation: "The natural conscience shares the rest of man's mortal fate; it has not life in itself. . . . It is too dead

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1. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 404. Cf. Ibid., p. 202: "The real and inmost life of the race is the tragic conflict of man's egoism with God's purpose of holy love."

2. F., The Justification of God, p. 31.

to save itself, too living not to feel dead."[1] Obviously the writer is pressing for a description of the desperate moral condition of humanity that will truly portray this condition and will at the same time allow for the preservation of the prius in the soul of man. The same tension is observed in a striking passage in The Principle of Authority: "[Redemption] is the new-creative action of the perfectly holy conscience of God on the helplessly guilty conscience of men. It is life from the dead."[2] The declaration is flat and unequivocal. However, Forsyth appears to have immediate qualms lest he has overstated his case, and it is not surprising to find appended to "helplessly guilty conscience" the terse but meaningful footnote: "I do not say 'totally corrupt.'"[3] By this strategic footnoting the case for a moral a priori is sustained.

Regardless of the degree of man's infection by sin, there can be no underestimation of the need for atonement. The holiness of God and the sinfulness of man make clamant call for action in a dark and critical situation. Bradley sums the matter up succinctly and inclusively:

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1. F., Missions in State and Church, p. 64.
2. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 58.
3. Ibidem.

> Communion with God, broken by the arrogance of mankind as a race, needs to be restored; but this is impossible without atonement. God's holiness must be satisfied; likewise man's conscience demands an objective atonement. Such atonement must, and yet cannot, be made by man; for holiness demands an adequate holiness to satisfy it. Therefore reconciliation must be initiated by God, and God will have to atone Himself through the person of Christ the God-man. This is the position at which Forsyth arrives.[1]

The elements of this summation should be borne in mind as an elaboration is made of Forsyth's understanding of the accomplishments of Calvary.

The Cross is central to the atoning work of Christ and to the cognition of His person. No room is left by the theologian for any misapprehension on this score. "Christ . . . is to us just what His cross is. You do not understand Christ till you understand His cross."[2] Harry Escott declares that "the Cross is Forsyth's abiding obsession."[3] Be that as it may, the Cross is never construed as a mere symbol in his thought. Whether explicitly stated or not, it is always the Cross of Christ to which

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1. Bradley, op. cit., p. 148.

2. F., The Cruciality of the Cross. p. 26. Cf. F., "The Cross as the Final Seat of Authority," The Contemporary Review (October, 1899), p. 607: "Everything turns on the Cross and the nature of the Cross's grace."

3. Harry Escott, Peter Taylor Forsyth: Director of Souls. London: The Epworth Press, 1948, p. 13.

he gives such earnest attention. It is Christ who gives virtue -- and the only virtue -- to the Cross. The "tree of Calvary" becomes effectual in solving the problem of man's sin and in bridging the hiatus between God and man because Christ died thereon. It is certainly not fair to say, as some critics have intimated, that this instrument of Christ's execution becomes, as it were, a "beam" in the eye of Forsyth that blinds him to the One who alone gives meaning and power to the Cross. Rather should it be said that the eyes of this Cross-obsessed man were fastened with full and clear vision upon the crucified Son of God.

Forsyth understands the work of Jesus Christ as God's sacrificial work of both reconciliation and atonement.

> Do not say it was Reconciliation only. It was Atonement. For when a relation like that of God and man is altered, it is altered on both sides. And, besides, there can be no ultimate reconciliation of a race to a holy God without atonement. God's moral order demands atonement wherever moral ideas are taken with final seriousness; and man's conscience re-echoes the demand.[1]

This work of Christ, answering to the demands of God's moral order and man's conscience, centers in the event of the Cross with all its associations with moral realism.

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1. F., The Cruciality of the Cross, p. 67.

> The act of the Cross is still the soul's centre, the centre of human destiny, and the centre of the real presence of God. . . . It is the centre of that evil conscience which is the pivot of the world's tragedy, and therefore, the world's destiny. . . . What moral realism finds at the dregs of life is guilt. And as yet the only effectual secret of guilt's treatment is the Cross. The reality of life is Christ -- and not Christ's beauty, pity, or self-sacrifice, but His love as God's holy grace, His moral mercy, moral judgment, moral atonement, and moral victory of redemption.[1]

The ground of all Christian goodness, hope, and assurance for the future is God's salvation of the world in His work in Christ centering in His act on the Cross. The objective element in this act "is that God Himself made the complete sacrifice"[2] for the redemption of man. The subjective element is man's response and appropriation of the reconciling and atoning work.

It is Forsyth's conviction that the forgiveness of God made effectual in the work of Christ must be interpreted in the light of God's holiness. He is opposed to the idea of the divine forgiveness as this idea is set forth in the thought of Ritschl and Harnack. He believes the interpretation of these thinkers empties the concept of reconciliation, as it is witnessed to in the Scriptures, of its expiatory content. This comes about because of their interpretation of the "Fatherhood of God" in which

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1. F., Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 128.
2. F., The Work of Christ, p. 92.

they do not give due attention to the Pauline passages relating to this doctrine. Forsyth maintains that the holiness of God is both His true nature and the essence of the moral order. Christ's work on the Cross is God's settlement of moral issues and the guarantee of man's historic and eternal destiny. In His work, in which He confronts man's sin with the holiness of God, Christ effects the forgiveness of man and manifests to him the essence and meaning of the moral order rooted in God's holiness.

The significance of the atoning Cross, as Forsyth understands it, is that here the eternal holiness of God is seen in redemptive encounter with sinful man. This does not permit interpreting the Cross-event as a persuasive spectacle which would lead men merely to <u>follow</u> the <u>Man</u> on the Cross. It also does not permit an interpretation of the event as the manifestation of a kind of love which loses sight of the judgment of evil involved in the <u>agape</u> of the holy God at work in Jesus Christ. An Abelardian or "Moral Influence" view of the Cross of Christ has grave deficiencies. The one dimension of the divine <u>agape</u> is judgment and the other is mercy or grace -- and both dimensions are revealed at Calvary.

According to Forsyth, God reconciles man to Himself in and beyond history. In the resurrection triumph of the

perfectly good will of Christ manifested in His act on the Cross, man sees God's purpose for the world, God's action in the world, and the divine principle for history. Involved in Christ's work of reconciliation is both the holy and righteous judgment of God and His holy love.

> The one meaning of an atoning Cross is the securing and establishing of God's holy and righteous judgment throughout the moral world to its victory in love -- His bringing forth judgment to such victory. It is the consummation of the holy conscience of God in the eternal action of love which incessantly creates a moral universe. If such an atonement become otiose to our faith, . . . the note of the holy, i.e. of the moral, must fade from it; and we are left with little beyond a piety either aesthetic, mystic or sentimental, but too easy for judgment, too feeble for the control of civilization, and fit only to become a branch of its culture.[1]

Forsyth makes it clear that the fulfilment of man's need of reconciliation with God can be accomplished in no other way than by the work of Christ on the Cross. This becomes effectual only when it is received and appropriated by man through faith in God's gracious act in Christ, which is God's holiness loving and judging.

In his exposition of this doctrine Forsyth asserts that "the work of Christ meant not only an action on man, it meant an action on God."[2] Within these two major

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1. F., The Justification of God, p. 108.
2. F., The Work of Christ, p. 103.

categories -- action on man and action on God -- in the final chapter of The Work of Christ he expounds "the three great aspects of the work of Christ."[1]

> These are -- 1. Its triumphant aspect; 2. Its satisfactionary aspect; 3. Its regenerative aspect. The first emphasises the finality of our Lord's victory over the evil power or devil; the second, the finality of His satisfaction, expiation, or atonement presented to the holy power of God; and the third the finality of His sanctifying or new-creative influence on the soul of man.[2]

These three aspects of Christ's work are regarded by Forsyth as being "wonderfully and prophetically entwined in I Corinthians i.30, where it is said that Christ is made unto us (2) justification; (3) sanctification; and (1) redemption."[3]

Following this preview of the main features of Forsyth's soteriological position, in the succeeding two sections his understanding of the work of Jesus Christ will be further explicated and summarized. The first section will deal with Christ's work primarily in relation to God while the second will set forth His work primarily in relation to man and evil power.

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1. F., The Work of Christ, p. 199.

2. Ibidem. These "aspects" resemble the three "types" of atonement presented and analyzed by Gustaf Aulén in his Christus Victor, trans. A. G. Herbert, (New York: The MacMillan Company, 1951).

3. Ibid., p. 200.

ii. The Work of Jesus Christ in Relation to Holy God

The work of Christ in relation to God in the thought of P. T. Forsyth needs to be understood in view of his interpretation of Christ's work as it relates to God's holiness and man's sense of guilt.

> The finished reconciliation, the setting up of the New Covenant by Christ, meant that human guilt was once for all robbed of its power to prevent the consummation of the Kingdom of God. . . . It is the holiness of God that necessitates the work of Christ, that calls for it, and that provides it.[1]

The great issue is not merely the necessity of atonement to a fatherly love but rather to a holy God's love, or to God's holy love, inclusive of judgment and grace or mercy. It is the holiness of the personal God's love that made necessary the act of a Person on the atoning Cross on behalf of other persons. As Forsyth asserts, "reconciliation is between <u>two persons</u> . . . and not between a failing person on the one hand and a perfect imperturbable process on the other."[2] Reconciliation must be founded upon a justification. This justification is neither by nor for grace or faith alone, but it is "by holiness and for it alone."[3]

> That is to say, . . . reconciliation is something that comes from the whole holy God, and it covers

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1. F., <u>The Work of Christ</u>, pp. 78-79.

2. Ibid., p. 76.

3. Ibid., p. 81.

> the whole of life, and it is not exhausted by the idea of atonement only or redemption only. It is the new-created race being brought to permanent, vital, life-deep communion with the holy God. Only holiness can be communion with the holy God. . . . However we be saved, we can only be saved in a way consistent with God's morality -- that is to say, with holiness.[1]

Reconciliation founded upon justification, which is based upon the holiness of God, is the gift of God through the act of Christ on the Cross.

When speaking of the reconciliation, Forsyth has consistently in mind the "great central verse, 'God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself.'"[2] This means that reconciliation, or the establishment of right relationship, was effected by God in Himself, by God's own judgment in Christ of the sin of mankind.

> In reconciliation the ground for God's wrath or God's judgment was put away. Guilt rests on God's charging up sin; reconciliation rests upon God's non-imputation of sin; God's non-imputation of sin rests upon Christ being made sin for us. . . . God by Christ's own consent identified Him with sin in treatment though not in feeling. God did not judge Him, but judged sin upon His head. . . . God made Him to be sin in treatment though not in feeling, so that holiness might be perfected in judgment, and we might become the righteousness of God in Him; so that we might have in God's sight righteousness by our living union with Christ.[3]

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1. F., The Work of Christ, p. 81.

2. Ibid., p. 82. The Scripture reference is II Corinthians 5:19 KJV.

3. Ibid., pp. 82-84.

During the progress of the discussion it becomes quite clear that "reconciliation has its effect not upon man only, but upon God also."[1] It was "not only an action on man, it meant an action on God."[2] The effect upon God, the satisfactionary aspect of Christ's work, or His "expiation or atonement presented to the holy power of God,"[3] Forsyth believes to be synonymous with the classical Biblical concept of justification. With respect to justification, its real objective element "is that God Himself made the complete sacrifice. . . . not that it was made to God, but by God."[4] God suffered on behalf of sinful man. If this be Patripassianism, critics may make the most of it. But Forsyth does exercise care in defending his view:

> The Cross is God working in Christ. Shall we say suffering? "It is a Patripassian heresy." But there is the suffering of identity and the suffering of sympathy. The Father did not suffer as the Son (that were too Sabellian) but He suffered with the Son. . . . When He spared not His Son did He spare Himself? . . . It cost the Father at least as much as the Son. . . . Our redemption drew upon the whole Godhead.[5]

Forsyth even goes so far as to speak of Christ's victory on the Cross "as costing God His life."[6] Yet it would be

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1. F., The Work of Christ, p. 87.
2. Ibid., p. 103.
3. Ibid., p. 199.
4. Ibid., p. 92.
5. F., Missions in State and Church, pp. 28-29.
6. F., The Justification of God, p. 147.

absurd to take this phrase literally. So, again, a cautious explication is in order:

> In the literal sense the death of God would leave the victory with the enemy of God. If God could be abolished there could have been no real God. But the theologian knows there is a sense in which the phrase is not nonsense. . . . Sin is the death of God. Die sin must or God. . . . But the meaning of the Incarnation is that God was capable, in His self-emptying in Christ, of a self-limitation, i.e. a self-mastery of holy surrender, whose moral effect was more than equal to the foreign invasion by sin. He died unto sin, as man dies by it. . . . God so died as to be the death of death. He commands His own negation -- even when it pierces as deep within Himself as His Son.[1]

This, however, leaves unanswered the question of the effect of the expiating work of Christ upon God. For, if God reconciled Himself, and if His holy love constantly endures and His grace is from His own holy eternity -- as indeed must be forever true, wherein did Christ change God's relationship to man? In answering this question Forsyth distinguishes between "a change of feeling and a change of treatment, between affection and discipline, between friendly feeling and friendly relations."[2] In each pair of distinctions it is the second member that had to change. If the attitude of God to His creation is not altered, the relationship is, for reconciliation is a

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1. F., The Justification of God, pp. 147-149.

2. F., The Work of Christ, p. 105. Cf. F., The Cruciality of the Cross, p. 68.

personal communion and communion is mutual. After communion has been restored God is free to act differently than He did before. And man is free to respond differently in a reconciled condition. This is what ensues from God's reconciling act in Christ on the Cross. This is what Forsyth means by the satisfactionary aspect of the work of Christ presented to the holy power of God. And the holiness which Christ offered in satisfaction to God was "not obedient suffering but suffering obedience . . . the hallowing of His name by perfect and obedient answer to His holy heart from amid conditions of pain, death, and judgment."[1]

What Christ as Expiator offered to God was Himself as man's Surety. While this expression has its limitations, what Forsyth intends that it should mean is "the Creator's self-assurance of His own regenerative power."[2] This is to say that: "Christ, as the Eternal Son of Holy God, can offer Him a holiness which creates and includes that of the race, and does not simply prophesy it."[3] It also could be stated that: "Christ alone in His sinless perfection can feel all God's holiness in judging sin; and therefore He alone could confess and honour it."[4]

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1. F., The Work of Christ, p. 205f.
2. Ibid., p. 212.
3. Ibidem.
4. Ibidem.

That which sinful man had no capacity for doing for himself Christ was able to do on his behalf because of His organic unity with man, His own perfect and impenitent holiness, and "His complete victory over the evil power in a life-experience of moral conflict."[1]

According to Forsyth, Christ's work of satisfaction to God was not His suffering.

> [It] was also more than the spectacle of His own holy soul presented to God. It was that holy soul . . . seen by God as the cause and creator of the race's confession, both of holiness and of sin, in a Church of the reborn. The satisfaction to God was Christ, not as an isolated character, or in an act wholly outside us and our responsive union with Him; but it was Christ as the author of our sanctification and repentance.[2]

In describing the change that takes place in God in reconciliation with respect to His practical relationship to man, Forsyth alludes to the parable of the Prodigal Son. Although the father's love followed his estranged and wayward son, "his relations, his confidence, his intercourse were with his brother . . . The father's heart is the same, but his treatment must be different."[3] So long as the son who flung himself away from the father's presence remained a prodigal he could not be treated otherwise. And Forsyth concludes:

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1. F., The Work of Christ, p. 213.
2. Ibidem.
3. Ibid. p. 109.

> So God needed no placation, but He could not exercise His kindness to the prodigal world, He certainly could not restore communion with its individuals, without doing some act which permanently altered the relation. And this is what set up the world's reconciliation with Him. It was set up by an act of crisis, of judgment.[1]

In His becoming both Victim of and Victor over man's sin and guilt Christ made effectual God's holy love for His children. Man's relationship to God was no longer one of estrangement, nor was God's treatment like that of the father toward the self-alienated son. It was a reconciled relationship and treatment like that of the parent for the returned prodigal, a relationship made possible and actualized by the divine-human Person on the Cross.

In interpreting the atonement, Forsyth agrees with Anselm that God is the object of the atonement of Christ. He does not agree with Anselm in not including man as an object of His atoning work. While the Anselmic view is that God is reconciled to man through Christ's work of satisfaction made to the honour of God Forsyth believes that the broken relationship between holy God and sinful man is restored by satisfaction made to the holiness of God.[2] Neither could he agree with the later Reformation

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1. F., The Work of Christ, p. 109.

2. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 330f. Cf. F., The Work of Christ, p. 223f.

view that grounded the objective necessity of the atonement in God's justice. While the divine self-determination to restore communion is a moral decision, it goes much deeper than justice.

It should be further noted that whereas Anselm of Canterbury assumes a cleavage between the Incarnation of Christ and His Atonement, Forsyth sees them as a unity and interprets Christ's redemptive work accordingly. Furthermore, at this point the latter day theologian parts company with Irenaeus who defines the Incarnation-Atonement unity as one in which the Incarnation of Christ was the necessary preliminary of His atoning work. Forsyth views them as being in conjunction with each other, not as successive to one another. In harmony with Irenaeus he believes that God is manifested as the Reconciler and the Reconciled in the work of Jesus Christ. Both agree that the agape of God removes the barrier between God and man and establishes a new relationship between them. The new relationship is not a legal one of justification but one of agape, a new creation, a new quality of existence.

Forsyth's strong emphasis, both on the agape of holy God and the principle of persons or beings in relationship, enables him to overcome the Objective-Subjective antithesis which interprets the work of Christ as

effecting a change exclusively in man's attitude toward God or in God's attitude toward man. According to the Forsythian viewpoint, change in relationship must be understood within the framework of the holy love of God. This involves God, Christ and man. Consequently serious attention must be given to the ethical dimensions of the work of Christ.

As has been previously indicated, Forsyth takes the position that Christ in His reconciling action effected change in God. For further clarification of the work of satisfaction, some particular ways in which Christ accomplished this change should be considered. The first way was through utter and complete obedience on the part of the Son of God. "Everything turns, not on His life having been taken from Him, but on its having been laid down."[1] Furthermore, "it was complete obedience on a universal scale to the moral requirements of grace, i.e. to a holy grace, to what the holiness of grace required in a situation of racial sin."[2] It was thus that Christ set up a real kingdom of holiness. Faith can understand that which theology has difficulty in explaining, namely:

> What Christ presented to God for His complete joy and satisfaction was a perfect racial obedience.

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1. F., The Cruciality of the Cross, p. 86.
2. Ibid., p. 97.

> It was not the perfect obedience of a saintly unit of the race. It was a racial holiness. God's holiness found itself again in the humbled holiness of Christ's "public person." He presented before God a race He created for holiness.[1]

To understand this properly it must be remembered that man's faith in Christ is centrally founded upon the concept of union with Him. Forsyth makes it clear that the moral element in the work of Christ is directly bound up with His obedience in relation to God. His obedience is the positive side of His work as it related to Eternal God.

The second way in which Christ effected change in God was in the acceptance and endurance of divine judgment.

> No obedience to a holy God is complete which does not recognise His judgment, and recognise it . . . by accepting it -- not necessarily in amount but in principle; not equivalently, as to amount of suffering, but adequately, as to confession of sanctity; and it confesses it practically, silently, in act and suffering.[2]

Christ yielded Himself wholeheartedly to final judgment on the race as the grand will of God. "Christ's death was atoning . . . because it was sacrifice unto holy and radical judgment. . . . unto the final judgment of holiness."[3] The consequences of accepting this judgment must be considered Christ's work in relation to God. The wrath of

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1. F., The Work of Christ, p. 129. Cf. F., Missions in State and Church, p. 241: "Christ's work was the work of a race's head, and it affected a whole race's destiny."

2. F., The Cruciality of the Cross, p. 99.

3. F., The Work of Christ, p. 135.

God toward sin was historical fact, and in bearing "the iniquity of us all" Christ bore the wrath of the holy God of love. In a certain sense (which must be carefully defined) He even experienced the withdrawal of God.

> God never left Him, but He did refuse Him His face. The communion was not broken, but its light was withdrawn. He was forsaken but not disjoined. He was insolubly bound to the very Father who turned away and could not look on sin but to abhor and curse it even when His Son was beneath it.[1]

Christ accepted such partial and temporary withdrawal because it was required by God in maintaining His holiness. "The dereliction upon the Cross, the sense of love's desertion by love, was Christ's practical confession of the holy God's repulsion of sin."[2] Freely, though in accordance with divine will, Christ accepted humanity's sinful status before God. And in consequence:

> God made Him sin, treated Him as if He were sin; He did not view Him as sinful. That is quite another matter. God made Him to be sin -- it does not say He made Him sinful. God lovingly treated Him as human sin, and with His consent judged human sin in Him and on Him.[3]

Although the act on the Cross was adequate confession, this is not to say that it was a confession like that of the guilty. Therefore, it must never be said that

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1. F., The Work of Christ, pp. 243-244.
2. Ibid., p. 150.
3. Ibid., p. 150f.

He, the Guiltless, received punishment at the hand of God.

> To say that Christ was punished by God who was always well pleased with Him is an outrageous thing. . . . But we may say at the depth of that great act of self-identification with us when He became man, He did enter the sphere of sin's penalty and the horror of sin's curse, in order that, from the very midst and depth of it, His confession and praise of God's holiness might rise like a spring of fresh water at the bottom of the bitter sea and sweeten all.[1]

In submitting to the penalty of sin, He suffered, and in His suffering obedience on the Cross He turned the Old Testament principle of sacrifice and self-surrender into a moral reality. Christ's relation to God was exalted in that historical yet timeless positive act of Self-sacrifice, the ultimate consequence of accepting judgment upon sin by which He satisfied divine holiness and effected God's reconciled relationship with man.

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1. F., The Work of Christ, pp. 147-148. Both here and in his The Cruciality of the Cross Forsyth tends to linger on the threshold of a Penal Theory of the Atonement. In the latter volume he injects a restrained word of warning: "We have to be cautious in using the word penalty in connection with what fell on Christ. We must renounce the idea that He was punished by the God who was ever well pleased with His beloved Son" (p. 41). In his contribution to the theological symposium on the Atonement at the turn of the century Forsyth tries to smooth over a very real difficulty by making a distinction between "penal" and "penitential": "The penal judgment or consequence or curse of sin did fall on Christ, the penitential did not. . . . The penalty was His, the repentance remains ours. His expiation does not dispense with ours, but evokes and enables it" (The Atonement in Modern Religious Thought, London: James Clarke and Co., 1900, p. 76).

A third way in which Christ's work brought about a change in God was in His confession of God's holiness in order to confess man's sin. For man's guilt only revealed his sin as it confessed God's holiness. But Christ's confession was of a different nature.

> He confessed God's holiness in reacting mortally against human sin, in cursing human sin, in judging it to its very death. He stood in the midst of human sin full of love to man, such love as enabled Him to identify Himself in the most profound, sympathetic way with the evil race; fuller still of love to the God whose name He was hallowing; . . . as if the whole race confessed through Him, . . . as though the whole race did justice to God through His soul.[1]

As over against the old view of substitutionary expiation, here the emphasis is on "solidary reparation, consisting of due acknowledgment of God's holiness and the honouring of that and not of His honour."[2] The sin-bearing of Christ converted the judgment of God into a blessing which issued in praise and thanksgiving on the part of man. And it brought about the communion of God with man on a reconciled basis in that it robbed sin of its divisive power.

It is along these lines of argument that Forsyth cogently contends that the redemptive work of Christ is primarily work in relation to God, wherein He brings men

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1. F., The Work of Christ, p. 150.

2. Ibid., p. 164f.

to God by making satisfaction to His holiness. "He represents before God . . . the new penitent Humanity that His influence creates."[1] Christ presents to God His confidence in Humanity and His antedated action on Humanity. Through faith in the Saviour whose holiness becomes man's holiness before God, man receives the precious boon of reconciliation.

It is only through an understanding of Christ's work as it relates primarily to God that His work in relation to man can be comprehended. If the mind does not in some way grasp the idea of the satisfactionary work of justification, it is unlikely to lay hold upon the true meaning of Christ's regenerative work on the soul of man and His victory over evil power.

iii. The Work of Jesus Christ in Relation to Sinful Man

Prerequisite to the understanding of the work of Christ in relation to man is the understanding of His work in relation to God, which has been presented in the previous section. A second essential is awareness of ideas of the atonement which are unsatisfactory in Forsyth's estimation.

> We must . . . avoid every idea of atonement which seems to reduce it to God's dealing with a mass of individuals instead of with the race as a whole --

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1. F., The Work of Christ, p. 193.

> instead of a racial, a social, a collective salvation, in which alone each individual has his place and part.[1]

This does not diminish the emphasis on the individual in his relation to God. It does, however, view the individual in the only way in which he is of ultimate importance, namely, in a regenerate and reconciled relationship to God and man through Jesus Christ. As Forsyth appraises the situation, this is the vital need of sinful man. "A man needs something to make him confident that his past sin, and the great transaction of his moral life is done."[2] This great transaction took place in the act of Christ on the Cross "brought home by the resurrection through the Spirit."[3] Although real and complete forgiveness is the appropriation of the world's atonement by each and every person, the basic issue is how Christ has worked and does work in relation to man to reconcile him to God and his fellow man, or how He accomplishes the great transaction of reconciliation.

(1) The Triumphant Work

This aspect of Christ's work "emphasises the

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1. F., The Work of Christ, p. 96.
2. F., The Cruciality of the Cross, pp. 46-47.
3. Ibid., p. 15.

finality of our Lord's victory over the evil power or devil."[1] This statement and others of a similar nature indicate the appeal that the "Christus Victor" idea has for Forsyth.[2] He feels that the issue set forth clearly in the Cross of Christ is the eternal holiness in conflict for its life against Satanic evil. The whole being of God and His whole campaign in the world is staked upon this issue. In this conflict God's righteousness is either secured or lost to the world forever. In bold relief against the Cross is "the absolute issue of the universe."[3] However, the divine resources were quite equal to the challenge of the evil power. On behalf of man, in the act of the Cross, God in Christ subdued Satan or overcame evil, which man was unable to do because of his participation in sin. Beelzebub and all his realm have been decisively defeated in the greatest conquest of all time and place.

> The prince of this world is already judged. He acts today as a power, indeed, but only as a doomed

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1. F., The Work of Christ, p. 199.

2. R. M. Brown rightly observes, "Readers of Aulén's 'Christus Victor' will recognize . . . points of affinity between the position he presents as the 'classic' view [of] the Atonement and the position of Forsyth" (P. T. Forsyth: Prophet for Today, Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1952, p. 84).

3. F., The Justification of God, p. 147.

> power. His sentence went out in the Cross. And he knows it. Humanity was rescued from him there.[1]

However, this rescue from Satanic evil is not only a rescue from something, it is also a rescue into something. The deliverance of man is not simply to take him out of hell, it is also to take him into heaven.

> Christ does not simply pluck us out of the hands of Satan, He does so by giving us to God. He does not simply release us from slavery, He commits us in the act to a positive liberty. He does not simply cancel the charge against us in court and bid us walk out of jail, He meets us at the prison-door and puts us in a new way of life.[2]

The victory of the theocentric goodness of Christ on His Cross meant not only the destruction of sin but also the reconstruction of the life of man. As Forsyth says:

> No sinful man can "unsin" himself, however he amend. It can only be done by the creation in him of a new life. It can only be done by the sinless Son of God, who lived from eternity in God's holiness, entered man, lived that holiness out in the face of sin, and thus not only broke the evil power by living it down but created that holiness in us by living it in.[3]

Christ accepted the judgment of God upon sin, but was Victor over it. Therefore, man in Christ becomes victor over sin, since he accepts both the love and judgment of Christ in relation to himself. Such is the triumphant aspect of the

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1. P. T. Forsyth, The Taste of Death and the Life of Grace (London: James Clarke and Co., 1901), p. 71.

2. The Work of Christ, p. 202.

3. Ibid., p. 209.

work of Jesus Christ.

(2) The Regenerative or Redemptive Work

The truth that God in Christ "not only broke the evil power by living it down but created that holiness in us by living it in"[1] suggests the important place that Forsyth gives to the regenerative effect of the atoning Cross. Thus the triumphant aspect blends into the re-creative aspect.

When he speaks of Christ recreating man Forsyth does not intend at all to imply that this is a creatio ex nihilo. "Creation out of nothing is a phrase of no meaning; it is unthinkable."[2] The Revelation of God in Jesus Christ, which "is in the same act Redemption, new Creation,"[3] is not to be equated with "a magician's power to bring out blossoms with a wave of his hand, or place coins

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1. F., The Work of Christ, p. 209.

2. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 158. To Forsyth a creatio ex nihilo being "unthinkable" is therefore an untenable concept. He thus takes a position contrary to that of Dr. Karl Barth who in his work, The Doctrine of the Word of God, trans. G. T. Thompson (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1936), represents the newness of the Christian man as "a quite inconceivable novum in direct contrast to all his ability and capacity" (p. 222), clearly implying that the new man is indeed a "creatio ex nihilo."

3. Ibid., p. 156. Cf. Ibid., p. 164: "Again, Revelation is Redemption." See also, F., Revelation Old and New, J. Huxtable, Ed. (London: Independent Press, Ltd., 1962, pp. 9-22).

suddenly where there were none."[1] While the new Creation, or the new Humanity -- to use a synonymous expression that occurs again and again in Forsyth's theological writing, particularly in The Christian Ethic of War -- is indeed a "miracle of Grace,"[2] it does not represent the deed of any thaumaturgist. The a priori of the human constitution in relation to Revelation as Redemption needs to be described both negatively and positively:

> It [is not] a germ whose innate resources Revelation develops. But it is a recognising power, a receptivity. It is not an activity, but it is as active as that -- as the function of receptive persons, and not merely vessels. We are not as passive as clay to the potter. We are not dead, perinde ac cadaver. . . . it is the response of a will to a will, of the whole finite person, to a whole person, absolute and holy.[3]

Although it is true that "there is no final and innate revelation of God in human nature, nothing so much deeper and surer than the gospel that it can lend it a licence,"[4] it is also true that the rationality and conscience of natural man provide "points of attachment or modes of action, an economy for a revelation when it comes."[5] While the Revelation-Redemption act is not magical, though

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1. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 157.
2. Ibid., p. 160. Cf. Ibid., pp. 84, 169.
3. Ibid., p. 157.
4. Ibid., p. 122.
5. Ibidem.

at the same time not solely rational, the important thing to Forsyth is that it is thoroughly and vitally moral.

The regenerative work of Christ takes place within man because man through faith is indwelt by the Christ who accomplished His work on the historic Cross. According to Forsyth, this means that --

> The newness of the new creature is less in himself than in his tennant. Christ lives in him. And the newness in the man corresponds to the new and original thing in Christ. If in Christ there was nothing essentially new, if He was but man at his spiritual best, we could not so speak. But all that makes Him the Son of God goes to differentiate the new creature He inhabits. . . . The new creation is not so much in me as in Him whose unique soul and life inhabits me as souls do souls. My knowledge is reborn beyond all science because I am known by Him whom I know; my life is reborn beyond all nature because it is now not lived by me but lived into me. The new master makes the new man.[1]

Practically, the significance of the new Creation is that the new Creator was in man "and the word was flesh in such a way that He and His are one by faith in a solidarity corresponding from beneath, mutatis mutandis, to the solidarity between Father and Son from above."[2] It is by "His revolutionary, causal, creative action on that inmost reality whereby man is man"[3] that "Christ approves

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1. F., This Life and the Next, pp. 108-109.
2. F., The Work of Christ, p. 226.
3. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 201.

Himself as a divine reality"[1] in and beyond man. Hence, life is a sanctity, for man is moral and holy in history and destiny. And for man to live the life of faith "is not another piece of work, but the new life which is the source of all work, and which has for its ventures all the capital of Christ's life behind it."[2] The way in which man's "saved" condition is brought about must be made clear and emphatic:

> We are not saved either by Christ's ethical character or our own, but by His person's creative power and work on us. Christ's holiness is the satisfying thing to God, because it is not only the means but also the anticipation of our holiness, because it carries all our future holiness latent in it and to God's eye patent; because in His saving act He is the power of which our new life is the product.[3]

Forsyth concludes that Christ's "moral and spiritual victory was so deep and thorough that it gives Him power to subdue other consciences to His holy self, world without end."[4] So it is that man's regenerate freedom is actualized in his faith-full life as servant and trustee of God's gift of grace through the saving act of Jesus Christ.

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 201.
2. F., This Life and the Next, p. 127.
3. F., The Work of Christ, p. 208.
4. Ibid., pp. 209-210.

(3) The Royal Work as Lord

As Christ in holiness takes possession of redeemed man, He brings man to the realization that he is saved for God's absolute service and holy honour.

> He is indeed Saviour and sole Saviour; but what He saves us into is His own absolute and holy Lordship. Personal Christianity is not simply being saved from ruin, but being saved into that active obedience. It is not being saved from hell, but saved into heaven. And that is our destined heaven -- to be in this Kingly Christ. God's real grace is not taking us out of despair but taking us into His service. . . . We acquire our soul only by glorifying God.[1]

It is Forsyth's conviction that the Christ of the atoning Cross is He "whose one end, both as He lived, died, and revived, was that He might be Lord both of the dead and living."[2] His royal work is that of being Sovereign Lord.

> By His perfect satisfaction of God's holiness, He became the trustee of it for God among men. Because He took man's judgment He became man's judge. . . . The supreme sacrifice is in principle the final judgment, and the supreme victim the last judge. . . . And He who met the whole demand of holiness with His person becomes the law's Lord, in as much as holiness is above mere righteousness. So by the objective nature . . . of His work for us He becomes our King -- the conscience of the conscience, Himself the living and holy law which is our moral ultimate. He is the fountain of moral honour, and the centre of moral authority, for ever and for all.[3]

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1. F., The Principle of Authority, p. 374.
2. Ibid., p. 417.
3. Ibid., p. 406f.

Christ's royal work as Sovereign Lord is that of being King and Keeper of the moral universe, of moral men in the moral universe. His sovereign royal work has been and is being made final through the atoning Cross which "is the consummation of the holy conscience of God in the eternal action of love which incessantly creates a moral universe."[1]

If the foregoing summaries of the work of Jesus Christ in relation to God and man seem to suggest a disunity in the work which is at variance with the unity of His person, it can be definitely stated that it was not Forsyth's intention that such should be the case. It is well to let him speak directly about this matter:

> The active and effective principle in the work of Christ was the perfect obedience of holy love which He offered amidst the conditions of sin, death, and judgment. . . . This principle (I hope to show) coordinates the various aspects which have been distorted by isolation. This one action of the holy Saviour's total person was, on its various sides, the destruction of evil, the satisfaction of God, and the sanctification of men. And it is in this moral medium of holiness (if I may so say) that these three effects pass and play into each other with a spiritual interpenetration.[2]

Although the various aspects of the work of Christ have been treated somewhat individually for purposes of explan-

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1. F., The Justification of God, p. 108.

2. F., The Work of Christ, pp. 201-202.

ation and clarification, this procedure has followed that of Forsyth who is deeply conscious of their correlation in the one Divine-human Person and His eternal and decisive act on the Cross.

4. The Unity of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ

The unity of the person and work of Christ is in evidence throughout the development of P. T. Forsyth's Christological thought. This is succinctly stated when he says, "The work of Christ, realised in the Church's experience through faith, becomes the avenue and key to the person of Christ.[1] The unity is further emphasized and clarified when he reasserts the conviction of Melanchthon: "The knowledge of Christ is to know His benefits, taste His salvation, and experience His grace; it is not . . . to reflect on His natures and the modes of His incarnation."[2]

Forsyth regards the moral as the real and personality as the key to being. Accordingly, he shifts his emphasis from the term "nature" to that of "person," from the metaphysic of being to the metaphysic of ethic. He begins his Christological construction "with the historic

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 220.
2. Ibid., pp. 220-221.

reality and unity of Christ's person."[1] This paves the way for his use of conceptual tools such as "personality, history, and society,"[2] as can be understood when he explains that "the ideas of personality and society . . . are condensed in such an idea as marriage, which is at once the keystone of society and the great symbol of Christ's relation to man."[3] "The marriage relation is the brief epitome of the social principle of the kingdom of God,"[4] which in turn "points to a social plurality in Him in whom His whole Church lives."[5] Through His work the faithful in His Church come to know His person as He is revealed to them in their experience of His redemption, regeneration and sanctification. This is Christ's moral action, which was and is centrally His act on the Cross.

According to Forsyth, "the ethical notion of the true unity as the interpenetration of persons by moral action must take the place of the old metaphysic of the union of natures by a tour de force."[6] Upon such an ethical basis he interprets the unity of the person of Jesus the Christ and the unity of His person and work in

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1. F., The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 229f.
2. Ibid., p. 230.
3. Ibidem.
4. Ibidem.
5. Ibid., p. 231.
6. Ibidem.

relation to persons in the Church and in the world. The implications and details of Forsyth's views have been explicated in the two previous sections of this chapter, the former in regard to the person of Christ and the latter with respect to His work. A more critical examination of major features of Forsyth's position will be undertaken in the final chapter when his Christological thought will be compared with that of Emil Brunner.

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTOLOGICAL THOUGHT OF EMIL BRUNNER

1. Presuppositions and Theological Method

The extensive theological ramifications of H. Emil Brunner's Christological thought dictate the giving of careful consideration to his presuppositions and methodology. For him all Christian doctrine is necessarily related to Christology. The Christ-centered mind of this theologian is therefore appreciative of the importance that attaches to the broad intellectual enterprise of dogmatics. In introducing the definition and place of dogmatics he seeks to clarify his understanding of the ground, the essential meaning, and the content of this Christian discipline:

> Dogmatics is not the Word of God. God can make his word prevail in the world without theology. But at a time when human thought is so often confused and perverted by fantastic ideas and theories, spun out of men's minds, it is evident that it is almost impossible to preserve the Divine Word without the most passionate intellectual effort to rethink its meaning and its content. The simple Christian may, it is true, understand and preserve God's Word without theology; but those Christians who are involved in the thinking of their own day, and who, as children of their own day, are deeply

> influenced by these currents of thought, an all-inclusive and thorough effort to re-think what has been given to faith is absolutely indispensable. This is particularly true for those whose calling it is to proclaim this faith to others.[1]

In brief, dogmatics is the re-thinking of the faith that has been given with the Word of God. This engagement of the intellect "presupposes the Christian Faith and the Christian Church not only as a fact but as the possibility of its own existence."[2] Having stated these presuppositions, Brunner proceeds to further explication. "Dogmatics . . . is the Science of Christian teaching or doctrine. But the subject always exists before the 'science' of the subject can be studied. . . . Dogmatics is a function of the teaching Church."[3] This in turn presupposes "life <u>within</u> the Church, and <u>in</u> its doctrine,"[4] for "dogmatic thinking is not only thinking <u>about</u> the Faith, it is <u>believing</u> thinking,"[5] wherein the Church

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1. Emil Brunner, <u>Dogmatics</u>, Vol. I: <u>The Christian Doctrine of God</u> (London: Lutterworth Press, 1949), p. v. Cf. Brunner, "The Present-Day Task of Theology," <u>Religion In Life</u> (Spring, 1939), p. 178: "Theology is an intellectual elaboration of the knowledge of God and His Word which is inherent in the simple faith of the Christian mother, but on the basis of the whole of the Scriptures and the thinking of the Church."

2. Ibid., p. 3. Cf. Brunner, <u>The Philosophy of Religion</u> (London: James Clarke & Co., Ltd., 1958 ed.), p. 17: "Only as a member of the community of believers is the thinker in a position to think theologically."

3. Ibid., p. 4. 4. Ibid., p. 5. 5. Ibidem.

reflects upon its own teaching. This does not mean that Christian teaching has no other form than that of dogmatics. In pastoral and evangelistic work, in preaching, and in the general program of Christian Education the Church engages in a variety of teaching. The difference between these pedagogical forms and dogmatics lies in the degree of stress placed upon the doctrinal element. "In all these other ways of teaching the doctrinal element is not emphasized to the same extent as in dogmatics, hence it does not predominate."[1] Along with his acknowledgment of the breadth of the field in which Christian doctrine is operative, Brunner explicitly declares that "dogmatics . . . is doctrine based upon the divine revelation, thus upon absolute Truth."[2] This is no extravagant or boastful claim, because man is not the creator of this truth. Man can only speak the divine Word after God, and so is liable to err in any statement and presentation of doctrine. A valid system of dogmatics must evidence an awareness of both the revelation of absolute Truth and the fallibility of man in handling this Truth. "If it forgets the first, then it becomes an individualistic 'religious conception',

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1. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 78. Since this chapter is devoted to the thought of Brunner, hereafter in this part of the thesis his name will be designated in footnotes simply by the initial B.

2. Ibid., p. 84.

which is without authority; if it forgets the second, then it becomes guilty of idolizing human forms of thought."[1]

Brunner observes the relationship of dogmatics to Christian faith when he says, "It is not the mistress, but the servant of faith and of the community of believers; and its service is no less, but also no more than the service of thought to faith."[2] There is no safe and easy way for the dogmatic theologian to render such a service to his own generation. It is required of him that he be thoroughly conversant both with Biblical thought and the thought of men of his own day. Even so, his task is fraught with double peril. He is constantly walking a knife edge that exposes him to the danger of slipping over into "the wrong 'offence' of being unintelligible . . . on the one hand, and the avoidance of the genuine 'Offence' of the Cross on the other."[3] Furthermore, in view of the limitations of dogmatics the best theological proficiency is not enough and the theologian who is not driven "to pray frequently and urgently from his heart: 'God be merciful to me a sinner', is scarcely fit for his job."[4]

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 84.

2. Ibid., p. 85. 3. Ibid., p. 84.

4. Ibid., p. 85. How critically important the job of the theologian can be is confessed by Brunner in an article on "The Present-Day Task of Theology" appearing in the Spring (1939) issue of Religion In Life:"I, myself, would

Faith, as Brunner identifies it in the course of his discussion, is not related to any doctrine or to any creedal statement requiring subscription on the part of the believer, but "it is the obedience of faith . . . to Jesus Christ Himself, who bears witness to Himself in the Word of the Scriptures through the Holy Spirit in the heart, conscience, and mind of man as the truth."[1] This is to understand that the Bible is central to the faith, for it is the form of God's revelation of Himself -- the supreme Reality and absolute Truth. Brunner often interprets Scripture in a free, i.e. non-literal, sense and he shies far away from the slightest suggestion of bibliolatry. The content, which is the essence of faith, is the holy love of God as revealed in Jesus Christ as witnessed to in the Scriptures and made effectual in man by response and appropriation. In the Bible the form is never separated from the content. Hence the Scriptures are authoritative: "because Christ, whom I am convinced in my conscience is the Truth, meets me in the Scriptures -- therefore I believe."[2] "Where revelation is concerned, it is not the

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probably never have become a Christian without the help of theological thinkers and my own theological thought" (p. 179).

1. B., The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 107.

2. Ibid., p. 110. Cf. B., The Philosophy of Religion, p. 34. Brunner deplores the change from the pliant

Book that matters first of all."[1] It is not the Scripture qua Scripture that is authoritative. Rather it is "an instrumental authority, in so far as it contains that element before which I must bow in the truth, and which also itself awakens in me the certainty of truth."[2] This all-important element is Christ, the Revelation. "The authority of Scripture . . . is not based upon the Scriptures as such, but upon the encounter of faith with the Christ of Scripture."[3]

The interpretation of the place and authority of the Bible points to what may well be called Brunner's "magnificent obsession" in all his theological writings: "his

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attitude of the Reformers toward the Scriptures to the iron-clad attitude reflected in later Orthodoxy (which meant a change from indirect to direct identity of the word of Scripture with the word of God) and quotes with approval the teaching of Luther: "Scripture is the cradle in which Christ lies."

1. B., Dogmatics, Vol II: The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1952), p. 201. Cf. B., The Philosophy of Religion, p. 22: "The Scriptures do not figure in Christian theology . . . as the expression of faith, but as the ground and norm of faith; hence they cannot serve as our starting point but rather as our abiding standard of reference."

2. B., The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 110. Brunner adds, "This is what Luther means by the 'Word of God', which is therefore not identical with the Word of Scripture, although it is only given to me through the Scriptures, and as the Word of the Scriptures."

3. Ibidem.

preoccupation with the dimension of the personal."[1] Profound thoughts on this dimension are brought sharply into focus in the notable book entitled The Divine-Human Encounter.[2] Here the pervasive theme is "the personal encounter between the Creator and the human creature",[3] or "when God meets man, Christian truth comes into being."[4]

As he enters upon the explication of the theme of his definitive work, Emil Brunner points out that the antithesis of subject and object, which is generally

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1. A. W. Loos in "The Translator's Preface," B., The Divine-Human Encounter (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1944), p. 7. Cf. E. L. Allen, Creation and Grace - A Guide to the Thought of Emil Brunner (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1950), p. 12. Allen says of Brunner that "the whole style of his thinking is Biblical, with an emphasis on the personal and the historical as against abstract concepts."

2. This may well be considered the most original of Brunner's writings. Actually it is the key to the subsequent three volumes of Dogmatics which endeavor systematically to fill in the outline sketched here. In 1964 a new and enlarged edition of The Divine-Human Encounter came from the press. The title, Truth as Encounter, is a much more exact translation of the Wahrheit als Begegnung under which the work was first published in German. The enlargement of the new edition consists of a long Introduction (q.v.) in which Brunner relates the concept of "Truth as Encounter" to the philosophical and scientific conceptions of truth, performing what he considers to be a task of Christian philosophy rather than of theology. See also B., Dogmatics, Vol. III: The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1962), pp. 212-225; B., Revelation and Reason (London: S.C.M. Press, Ltd., 1947), pp. 362-374.

3. A. W. Loos in "The Translator's Preface," B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 7.

4. Ibidem.

regarded as a mould into which all thinking must inevitably run, is a Greek concept which is foreign to the Biblical thought of God in His relation to man. Furthermore, it is his conviction that "our understanding of the message of salvation and also of the Church's task is still burdened with the Subject-Object antithesis which originated in Greek philosophy."[1] He goes on to emphasize this point and to interject a caveat:

> The Biblical understanding of truth cannot be grasped through the Object-Subject antithesis: on the contrary it is falsified through it. This does not mean, to be sure, that we should avoid using this conception, since it is indispensable for natural-rational knowing, or that we can do without it in every respect; indeed we should have to stop thinking altogether if we entirely gave up using it. This thesis does mean, however, that where the heart of faith is concerned -- the relation between God's Word and Faith, between Christ and faith -- the Objective-Subjective correlation must be replaced by one of an entirely different kind.[2]

The relation of subject and object, so familiar even to a philosophical dilettante, needs little exposition. In it the thinking subject stands over against the object of thought with a manifest gulf between. The problem of the bridging of this gulf has been an age-long challenge to philosophy. In the course of a prolonged

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1. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, Foreword, p. 6. Cf. B., Truth as Encounter, Introduction, p. 7.

2. Ibid., p. 13f.

controversy the consensus has been that the thinking subject is active in relation to the passive object and has a certain kind of authority and right of possession over it. In any case the distinction has been vividly felt. Cognizant of these facts, Brunner reviews the vacillating course of Christian thought operating in the line of the objective-subjective categories.[1] In the history of the Church Christian thinking has tended to shift back and forth between an objectivism and a subjectivism which are both alien to Biblical truth. By objectivism is meant a tendency of man's spirit and will to get something into his power, to hold it and to manipulate it. Thus the theologian takes the divine truth and forms it into a sacrosanct body of doctrine, while the churchman expresses the truth in a sacramental system, and there it imperiously stands -- this body of doctrine or this sacramental system -- over against the human mind that has worked it out. Then in contrast, and often in definite reaction, there comes the swing in the direction of subjectivism. Here the bent is to make religious truth center in the mind and feelings of the thinker who, without the aid of the concrete events of history, believes that he is able within the depths of his own soul to lay hold upon God

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1. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 9-29.

and to commune with Him. The familiar pattern of Church history reveals how the pendulum has swung between the stifling rigidity of orthodoxy or institutionalism on the one side and the individualistic laxity of pietism or mysticism on the other.

The picture is quite otherwise, Brunner maintains, when we turn to the Bible. There God and man are found in the most intimate and personal relation, a quite inescapable relation outside of which it is impossible for man to stand so as to make God merely the object of his thought. The relation is always and essentially the relation of "I" and "Thou."

> The Biblical relation in the Old and New Testaments deals with the relation of God to men and of men to God. It contains no doctrine of God as He is in Himself [Gott-an-sich], none of man as he is in himself [Menschen-an-sich]. It always speaks of God as the God who approaches man [Gott-zum Menschen-hin] and of man as the man who comes from God [Menschen-von-Gott-her]. That God -- even in His "I-am-ness" [An-sich-Sein] -- wishes from the first to be understood as the God who approaches man is precisely the meaning of the doctrine of the Triune God; that man, even in his natural being, is always the man who comes from God is the meaning of the doctrine of the image of God and of original sin. And both are known in their fullness only in Jesus Christ, in whom as the incarnate Son of God both the God who approaches man and the man who comes from God are revealed.[1]

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1. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 31. Cf. B., Revelation and Reason, p. 370f.

The actuality of this relation can only be attributed to the will and creative act of God. "God creates for Himself a person as a counterpart of Himself."[1] In some respects the Bible seems to stress the omnipotence and all-efficiency of the Creator in a way that leads up to the boundary of Pantheism -- up to but never over this boundary. Man is an entirely dependent being, and yet he has been endowed with a certain measure of independence. Therefore, according to Brunner, Determinism is absolutely excluded, for man's freedom, though circumscribed, is very real and must never be disparaged. In and because of the Divine-human relationship man is both free and dependent in a proportionate ratio. "Man's freedom is grounded precisely in his dependence on God, so that a mixiumum of freedom is at the same time a maximum of dependence."[2]

Brunner is under strong conviction that the unique, personal relation between God and man could be made known to man only through a divine revelation. In His infinite grace God met this requirement by entering History in the person of Jesus Christ. By such divine initiative and

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1. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 35.
2. Ibid., p. 37.

action "personal correspondence"[1] is established between God and man. "God does not reveal this and that -- He reveals Himself by communicating Himself."[2] The relation thus revealed can be expressed in two words, "Lord" and "Fellowship." To say that "God is Lord" means "first of all simply that God can do what He wills with what He has created. . . . [It] is basically nothing other than to take with entire seriousness the idea of creation."[3] However, in relation to man, "God wills to be acknowledged as Lord in freedom, since it is by virtue of such free acknowledgment that He is Lord in the highest sense."[4] Yet above all and on a unique basis God wills to have fellowship with His human creatures. "God creates a counterpart who in freedom acknowledges Him as Lord, but

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1. This expression appears quite often in The Divine-Human Encounter but seldom thereafter, and not at all in Revelation and Reason which was written only three years later and which contains a great deal of similar subject matter. This does not mean, however, that there has been any real change of accent. By "personal correspondence" Brunner is seeking primarily to express the correlation between the Word of God and faith and secondarily to show the formal relation between God and man. He defines and illustrates the term on a number of pages in the earlier work. Cf. especially pp. 47, 50, 54, 92, 95, 96, 106f.

2. Brunner, Christianity and Civilisation, Vol. I (London: Nisbet & Co., Ltd., 1948), p. 37.

3. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 38.

4. Ibid., p. 39.

God does this in order that He may communicate with this creature in love."[1]

Man's response to this divine approach is no affair of mere reason, as if he were in a position to stand over against the divine Word and judge of its truth or falsehood. There is here in the deepest sense, as Brunner sees it, a personal encounter which demands a personal response. The Word, when it is made effectual to the soul, is the self-communication of God as Person to person, which reveals to man God's Lordship and Love in such a way that he acknowledges and accepts them as integral to the relationship. This response to the Word of God, "an act in which the whole person is summoned and responds in order to receive the self-giving of God,"[2] is in the New Testament called pistis, i.e. faith or obedience-in-trust. This is a word of rich meaning, replete with all that is significantly involved in man's participation in his encounter with God:

> In pistis is contained the personal acknowledgment of the Lord as Lord, obedience, and the personal acceptance of the divine self-giving love in

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1. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 41.

2. Ibid., p. 48. Cf. B., The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, p. 172: "To the self-communication of God there corresponds the double act of acceptance and self-surrender which takes place in faith."

> grateful responding love. Faith is the complete self-giving of man which is consequent upon having received the unconditional self-giving of God.[1]

The way has now been prepared for Brunner to declare forthrightly and with cogency in favor of the method which emphasizes personal relationship over the false "Objective-Subjective antithesis" procedure in arriving at an understanding of Biblical truth:

> There is no longer a place here for the Objective-Subjective antithesis. The application of this pair of concepts in this connection is entirely meaningless. The self-revelation of God is no object, but wholly the doing and self-giving of a subject -- or, better expressed, a Person. A Person who is revealing Himself, a Person who demands and offers Lordship and fellowship with Himself, is the most radical antithesis to everything that could be called object or objective. Likewise, the personal act of trust is something quite other than subjectivity -- that subjectivity which can become actual only when it is over against an object, that subjectivity which appropriates what is foreign to it.[2]

Personal correspondence between God and man is the basic structure that embraces "all that the Bible has to say about God's being and doing, about time and eternity, about the divine purpose and creation, about sin and redemption, about grace and works, about faith and penance,

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1. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 49. Cf. B., The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, pp. 162-175. See also B., Revelation and Reason, pp. 32-42.

2. Ibid., p. 53.

about Church and Sacrament."[1] Furthermore, all of these specified parts of the Biblical proclamation formulate in a specific way this underlying relation. So vital is this fundamental presupposition in Brunner's studied estimation that he declares almost vehemently that everything that contradicts it "must be rejected and fought against as an un-Bbilical and even anti-Biblical error of speculation or doctrinal distortion."[2] While the objective and subjective categories in the philosophical and scientific realms serve a useful purpose in achieving the closest possible correspondence between thinking and being, Brunner believes that they simply do not work when knowledge of God is the concern of the thinker. When this is the case three serious inadequacies become evident. These come to light in view of the fact that God is absolutely "someone" and in no sense "something." To know, to think "something" rather than "someone" is "first of all, something over

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1. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 53. In "A Spiritual Autobiography," the fourth lecture given at the spring conference of Kyodan-related missionaries at Yumoto on April 1, 1955, published in The Japan Christian Quarterly, No. 3, 1955, Brunner gives a strong testimony anent the "personal correspondence" thesis: "You cannot understand the Gospel unless you let yourself be personally engaged, which is the same as being challenged by the Thou which you encounter. This has become since 1938 the lodestar of my theological thinking, first expressed in the little book Wahrheit als Begegnung (The Divine-Human Encounter) in 1938" (p. 243). Italics are his.

2. Ibidem.

which I have disposal; secondly, something that does not essentially change me; and, thirdly, something that leaves me solitary."[1] In contrast, the meeting of absolutely personal God with man in faith encounter has entirely opposite effects:

> If the Word of God meets me in faith, this is all reversed. Then I do not have something like property which is at my disposal, but I myself become property; then I myself become disposable. This is what faith stammeringly says in the word, "My Lord" . . . "my" means . . . not that God stands at my disposal, but I at His. Herewith, in the second place, a radical reversal occurs. Faith . . . does not give me "something", but does change me in the very core of my person. . . . A lord of self becomes one who obeys. And, thirdly, solitariness is now also past. . . . Into the solitariness of the "Thou-less" I, God has stepped as Thou. . . . Faith is the radical overcoming of the I-solitariness. . . . now there is unconditional fellowship.[2]

It is thus that Brunner sets forth the merits of that method in theology which emphasizes personal relationship in understanding the truth of faith as opposed to the tendencies of Objectivism and Subjectivism and the rational concept of truth determined by them. In so doing he makes the significant point that in the divine-human encounter an exchange occurs "which is wholly without analogy in the sphere of thinking."[3] The one and only analogous encounter

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1. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 61.
2. Ibid., 61f.
3. Ibid., p. 59.

is that between human beings, the meeting of person with person. Yet this meeting must be considered only relatively analogous for the reason that the "something" element is more or less intrusive in every encounter on the human level. Whereas, "when I stand opposite to God, I am face to face with Him who unconditionally is no 'something', who in the unconditional sense is pure 'Thou.'"[1] In this critical and determinative moment when God becomes "Thou" in the experience of the man of faith, "He ceases to be an object of my thinking and transforms the Object-Subject relation into a relation of personal correspondence."[2] So, as Brunner believes, the age-old dilemma between Objectivism and Subjectivism is transcended by the personal correlation between God and man.

In his dialectical theological approach, stressing the dialogue between God and man, Brunner is obviously strongly bound to the Barthian presupposition that there is a radical discontinuity between God and man, the Eternal and the temporal, the Creator and the creature. In Revelation and Reason he emphatically declares, "The contrast between Creator and creature sets an infinite distance between God and man, the distance between Him

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1. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 60.

2. Ibidem.

whose Being is unconditioned and independent, and him whose being is conditioned and dependent."[1] Anent this line of argument, a succinct comment of Birch Hoyle on the thought of Barth and Brunner merits quotation:

> From two axioms these Swiss theologians proceed as they approach the problems of philosophy and theology. These are regulative of all their thinking on the formal side. One is taken from the old Reformed doctrine as applied to the dual nature of Jesus Christ: Finitum non est capax infiniti .. . the other is drawn from Kierkegaard the Dane: "There is an infinite qualitative difference between time and eternity: God is in heaven, man on earth."[2]

This raises the issue of the nature of revelation and its relation to nature and to natural man -- man as creature.

According to Brunner there is both a special and a general revelation. With respect to the former he is clear and unequivocal:

> The Christian religion . . . is based wholly upon something which has actually happened, within this world of time and space, and indeed, to put it still more plainly, it is based upon something which has taken place once for all. . . . In the Christian religion "salvation" is always indissolubly connected . . . with the fact of the

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1. B., Revelation and Reason, p. 25. Cf. Ibid., p. 45: "The sovereignty of God, absolute transcendance, is very closely connected with what the Bible calls the holiness of God. As the Holy One, God is the Wholly Other, the Incomparable, the Sole Reality, . . . the Unfathomable, . . . that is, as One who cannot be known; and it is thus that He makes Himself known."

2. R. Birch Hoyle, The Teaching of Karl Barth (London: S. C. M. Press, 1930), p. 98.

> Incarnation of the Divine Word, with the fact of Atonement by Jesus Christ. Although the time and space element, that is, the element of historical contingency, does not, in itself, constitute a revelation, yet the revelation upon which the Christian faith is based is founded upon this fact alone.[1]

Furthermore, any possible severance of special revelation from this unparalleled and unrepeatable event would be theologically disastrous. "The whole meaning of this revelation would be destroyed if it could be severed from this unique event which took place once for all."[2]

As for general revelation, which Brunner in his extended discussion in Revelation and Reason chooses to call "The Revelation in the Creation",[3] there is again no question of reality. This revelation is for him a fact thoroughly attested by the Biblical witness to which he purposes to be true. "We teach a general revelation, or a revelation in the Creation, because the Holy Scriptures teach it unmistakably, and we intend to teach it in accordance with the Scripture."[4] In further confirming his position Brunner can appeal to a long tradition in

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1. B., The Mediator (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1947), p. 24f.

2. Ibid., p. 25.

3. B., Revelation and Reason, pp. 58ff.

4. Ibid., p. 59. Brunner goes on to say, "The fact that the Holy Scriptures teach the revelation of God in His works of creation needs no proof" (p. 60).

Church and creed, especially to the Reformers -- notably to Calvin and Luther.

The difficult question that now presents itself is not whether there are two kinds of revelation, for this question can be answered flatly and affirmatively. The troublesome question is how the two revelations, that in the creation and that in Jesus Christ, are related to each other. Professor David Cairns goes to the heart of Brunner's answer to this question when he says, "The relation of the special revelation to what man has made of the revelation in creation is dialectical, consisting at the same time of a 'Yes' and a 'No'".[1] Brunner himself gives typical confirmation of such a judgment when, after declaring the uniqueness of the Christ-event, he goes on to affirm that this event can only partially relate to the revelation in nature, being "neither an absolute denial nor an absolute affirmation, but both at the same time, the Christian conception of a general revelation is in principle 'dialectic'."[2] It is by such a theological

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1. David Cairns, "The Theology of Emil Brunner", a contribution to Theologians of Our Times, A. W. Hastings and E. Hastings, Eds., (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1964), p. 92.

2. B., The Mediator, p. 33. Cf. B., Revelation and Reason, p. 62: "In the teaching of the Bible and the Reformers the revelation through the Creation is certainly not a 'side line'; it is not something that has to be placed alongside of the revelation of God in Christ, but

stance that he provides for his understanding of general revelation and is enabled, as he believes, to explain how man can be the recipient of this revelation in addition to the revealing of God in Jesus Christ. The dark and stark fact that militates against this recipiency is that man is a sinner. For Brunner the factor of sin in the life of unredeemed man is indeed a formidable barrier. This contention is pervasive in Man In Revolt and throughout the pages of his Dogmatics. Yet the dialectician is not minded to press this point to a dead-end conclusion. To avoid this a nicety of expression is required. Brunner is choosing his words carefully when he says, "What the 'natural man' knows apart from Christ is not half the truth but distorted truth."[1] This is due to the sinfulness of man in whom the image of God became twisted and misshapen in the Fall, but was not completely destroyed.

In Natural Theology (comprising a translation of Natur und Gnade and the reply "Nein!" by Dr. Karl Barth) Emil Brunner attempts to resolve the complexities in which he becomes inevitably involved in working out the

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its relation is quite different; that is, it is dialectical in character."

1. B., The Mediator, p. 33.

relationship between general and special revelation.[1] The background and foreground of this discussion constitute an important part of the well known polemic engagement with Karl Barth. While the father of so-called "Neo-Orthodoxy" claims that "creation is only known in Christ,"[2] his fellow protagonist argues that "we know through Jesus Christ that God has revealed Himself to us before, but that we did not properly admit this revelation."[3] Barth will not concede that God's testimony comes outside of Christ; he will admit a general grace, but not a general revelation. Brunner elaborates his own position by saying that it is first possible to reason concerning the creation in the light of the special revelation in Jesus Christ. Because of sin, natural man cannot receive the general revelation. Through Christ we can rightly know the works of creation, and only through the second revelation can man come to a knowledge of the first. On the basis of this brief exposition of Brunner's position vis à vis that of Barth it would seem to be obvious that it is the former's intention to emphasise the objective possibility of knowing the revelation in creation, and at the same time to

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1. B., Natural Theology, Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the reply "Nein!" by Dr. Karl Barth. Peter Fraenkel, translator (London, Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press, 1946), pp. 15-64.

2. Ibid., p. 61fn. 3. Ibidem.

indicate that this possibility does not necessarily involve the subjective possibility of this knowledge, because the reason of man has been broken and blinded by sin. The revelation remains in its objective and creaturely reality, but man cannot see it because his whole nature has been darkened.

The tides of verbal and conceptual conflict between Brunner and Barth swirl around the idea of the imago dei in man, and Brunner develops concepts of the "formal" and "material" images of God in man as he utilizes the Reformers' dialectical interpretation of the relationship between reliquiae imaginis dei and restoratio imaginis dei propter Christum.[1] Their "vestigial image of God" becomes his "formal image of God" which remains in man after the Fall. Their "restored image of God through Christ" becomes his "material image of God" restored through the Begegnung or encounter between God and man in and through Jesus Christ, the incarnate and atoning special revelation of God. Brunner contends that natural man kept his formal image of God after the Fall and that this image consists

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1. B., Natural Theology, pp. 23-24, 35-50. Cf. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, pp. 91-96; The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, pp. 57-61, 75-78; Man In Revolt (London: Lutterworth Press, 1939), pp. 82-204; God and Man (London: SCM Press, 1936), p. 116fn. These multiple references are indicative of the fact that "the image of God" is an oft repeated and extensively treated theme in Brunner's writing.

of his "capacity for words (Wortmächtigkeit) and responsibility."[1] These qualities distinguish man from the beast and enable him to stand outside himself. The formal image of God in man is the "point of contact" (Anknüpfungspunkt)[2] for the Word of God in the Gospel which comes to man in faith-encounter. In taking this position Brunner is making a definite parallel between his teaching about the image of God and that of the point of contact in that he again makes the distinction between the formal and the material. The point of contact is the formal image, humanity, responsibility.

In regard to the conscience of man, Brunner holds this to be the central point in natural human self-understanding. In the relation of fallen man to the Word of God "this 'point' is the general point of contact, insofar as

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1. B., Natural Theology, p. 31. Brunner goes on to say of the relationship of these constitutive elements of the formal image: "The possibility of his being addressed is also the presupposition of man's responsibility. Only a being that can be addressed is responsible, for it alone can make decisions."

2. Ibidem. Cf. B., Man In Revolt, pp. 527-546. Cf. also, "Die Frage nach dem 'Anknüpfungspunkt' als Problem der Theologie." In: Zwischen den Zeiten, 10, 1932, Heft 6, pp. 505-532. In this article Brunner gives direct and critical attention to the question of how the word of faith can be spoken to and heard by the natural man. A burning missionary zeal and a deep desire to preach the gospel to non-believers are the determinants of the significance of this question for the theologian. "The question of the 'point of contact' is fully understood and urgent only for those who have part in the work of the church as preachers, missionaries and pastors" (p. 529). Translation mine.

it is the general immanent possibility."[1] Beyond this concession he is quite unwilling to go. Actually he believes that conscience is a dark and sinister factor in man's existence. "The sinister thing about conscience is precisely this, that primarily it has nothing to do with God at all, that it attacks man like an alien, dark, hostile power."[2] Therefore, it is only proper to speak of a bad or accusative conscience. Brunner points out that what is subjectively known as the evil conscience "is the same thing as that which is objectively called standing under the wrath of God."[3] The point of contact in the conscience is not a neutral point, but is a negative quality. There is both continuity and discontinuity. However, "the continuity always refers only to the formal 'that', whereas the discontinuity touches the content 'what'."[4] "Therefore, the

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1. B., "Die Frage nach dem 'Anknüpfungspunkt'," p. 518. Translation mine, as is true of other quotations from this article. Cf. B., Man In Revolt, p. 63: "According to Kierkegaard, the sense of 'guilt' engendered by conscience belongs in contradistinction to the sense of sin, to the sphere of immanence."

2. Brunner, The Divine Imperative (London: The Lutterworth Press, 1937), p. 156. Shortly thereafter Brunner says, "As conscience it does not speak of God, but it is the flaming sword which drives us away from the presence of God" (p. 157).

3. B.,"Die Frage nach dem 'Anknüpfungspunkt'", p. 524.

4. Ibid., p. 525. It should be noted here that Brunner uses the word "only" (nur) with respect to the formal side, indicating his disparaging attitude toward all form.

same words; but also, all words receive a new significance in Christ."[1] Redeemed man with his "material image" of God through Christ, has knowledge of what God is like, how God is minded toward sin, how man is to live having misused his freedom and not having carried out his responsibility before God, what his ultimate destiny is, and what the will and holy love of God really are.

Emil Brunner affirms in his dialectical theology that the special revelation of God to men is both eternal and unique, therefore decisive. It is of prime necessity, he feels, to make the double asseveration of eternality and uniqueness.

> If it were eternal only, it would not be decisive. For in that case it would be the common element which lies behind all that is common to humanity as a whole. It would not be an event at all, but only an idea, which would shine through the events of history as their "background." That which is merely significant is never decisive. On the other hand, if revelation were wholly and only unique, then it would be so absolutely remote and unintelligible that we could have no relation to it at all. It is decisive because it is both unique and eternal.[2]

It is the absolute uniqueness and, in consequence, the absolute decisiveness of the Christian revelation that forces man to come to grips with "the problem of history."[3]

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1. B., Die Frage nach dem 'Anknüpfungspunkt', p. 525.
2. B., The Mediator, p. 304.
3. Ibid., p. 303.

Brunner holds that the revelation of God in Christ is both from beyond history and within history. In general revelation and in the formal image of God in man there is indeed a sense of the seriousness of existence. But only in special revelation and in the material image of God in man has "every historical element . . . gained a new quality."[1] And this quality is to "have a new consciousness of time and history"[2] possessed in faith alone, which to Brunner has this significance:

> The moment gains the quality of an absolutely decisive moment through Christ . . . in so far as we receive the Word which in Him has become "flesh." To say that history has become problematic means: whereas previously men lived simply within history, . . . we have now, so to speak, raised our heads above history.[3]

Consequent to this unique and decisive revelation, man as man in history is enabled to see from beyond history the sin which permeates this realm; he is called upon by the exacting reality of Jesus Christ to make an existential decision, to take his entire existence seriously, whereupon he gains a new meaning of his existence and a new awareness of time and eternity. History, for Brunner, is the encounter in faith of the "I" by the "Thou." This absolutely unique event of the coming of God to man in

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 306.
2. Ibidem.
3. Ibid., p. 306f.

Jesus Christ alone gives human existence and history their true meaning. This point is succinctly set forth in the last chapter of The Mediator, where among other things, the author says: "History in the qualified sense exists only through Christ."[1] Within the broader field of human history in general there is then the "particular thing" called "saving history" (Heilsgeschichte), or the history of revelation, and this history is absolutely determinative in coming to a knowledge of God. "Outside this particular history, the specific history of revelation and salvation, we do not know the living God."[2]

Commenting on special revelation versus general revelation in the teaching of Emil Brunner, Professor Cairns has said:

> It is not possible to build the knowledge of God given in the special revelation upon the sure foundation of natural knowledge of God given in the general revelation, for the simple reason that general revelation is not a sure foundation. The light of the special revelation shows that natural knowledge of God is inextricably mingled with error. And as man's understanding of God is mingled with error, so is his own understanding of himself partly true and partly false. For man's very being is wholly dependent on God, and if he is wrong in his thought about God, he will be wrong also in his thought about himself. Faith is thus concerned both to affirm and to deny the teaching of natural anthropology, ethics and philosophy, as it finds such

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 614.

2. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 198.

teaching true and false.[1]

In his Dogmatics I Brunner notes a certain similarity between theology and philosophy with respect to a common aim and concern in the quest for Ultimate Truth:

> In its relation to the Ultimate, the Absolute . . . dogmatics is like philosophy. Its aim is not to establish facts, but to seek to discover the ultimate and final truth behind the facts. . . . In contrast to all philosophy, however, theology does not need to seek for this truth by its own efforts after knowledge; its task is rather to illuminate by means of thought that revelation which is given to man through faith.
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> Like philosophy, it is concerned with the Eternal Logos, but in contrast to philosophy it is concerned with the Logos which became flesh . . . it is not concerned with an abstract idea, but with the Logos who is the Son of the Father.[2]

These statements, considered along with the previous discussion of his thought, are indicative of Brunner's conviction that both theology and philosophy have a place in gaining true knowledge. Furthermore, his assertions demonstrate his belief that philosophy has validity and usefulness in relation to theology. However, a further clarification of his position is required at this point.

As previously indicated, Brunner believes that theology is the servant of Christian faith; its service is that of thought developing and formulating the meaning and

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1. David Cairns, "Introduction," B., God and Man, pp. 15-16.

2. B., The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 63.

implications of faith. This faith, "to which theology gives the form of scientific conceptions, is the knowledge and acknowledgment of God's self-revelation in Jesus Christ."[1] Through special revelation faith, so defined, can gain knowledge of ultimate and absolute truth. In relation to theology and to the faith to which theology is subservient, philosophy is seen as playing an undeniably co-operative role:

> Whether from the point of view of philosophy, or from that of faith, we may deplore this co-operation of philosophy and faith in Western philosophy . . . we cannot deny its existence as a fact. . . . A great number of the philosophical conceptions which today every philosopher uses naturally, as part of his intellectual equipment, have been created by Christian philosophers; on the other hand, no Christian theologian . . . can carry on his work without using conceptions that are derived from philosophy. The synthesis of philosophy and Christianity, in some way or other, . . . is part of our destiny.[2]

However, this synthesis is both factual and troublesome. Brunner notes with approval the stern insistence of Emile Bréhier (quoted by M. Étienne Gilson) that reason in its own sphere -- which is inclusive of philosophy -- be granted an unhampered autonomy.[3] The opposition of believers to the synthesis is of a different nature. In this case

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1. B., The Philosophy of Religion, p. 15. This does not mean "to make faith rational by giving it scientific form", which Brunner previously insists "can never be required of Christian theology" (p. 14).

2. B. Revelation and Reason, p. 375. 3. Ibidem.

philosophy per se is deeply suspect. Biblical support for this view is found in certain teachings of the Apostle Paul, to whom appeal is often made.[1] The annals of Christendom in some quarters and in some aras bear record of a distrust not only of philosophy but also of reason itself, as in Tertullian's Against Heretics. And yet there are great Christian thinkers such as Luther, Pascal, and Kierkegaard who "remind us that the warning against a synthesis of religion and philosophy, believed to be injurious to faith, is not intended to discredit the use of reason, but is directed only against philosophical thought as such."[2] Kierkegaard is hailed as an outstanding Christian who was "not only a theological but a philosophical thinker, . . . who used his great philosophical powers in the service of his faith."[3] The development of his argument shows that Brunner is concerned to allow philosophy to be the handmaiden of theology, which is faith thinking and illuminating the Revelation it receives. The theologian as a Christian philosopher is free to employ philosophy as a valid interpretative instrument for his theology.

In the latter pages of Revelation and Reason

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1. B., Revelation and Reason, p. 376. References given are I Corinthians 1:19ff and Colossians 2:8.

2. Ibidem.

3. Ibid., p. 377.

Brunner makes further and significant reference to his prolonged debate with Karl Barth. Over against the rationalism which is thoroughly eschewed by both thinkers Brunner sees in Barthianism "an equally exclusive and radical fideism which, alongside the Word of revelation does not recognize any second, independent source of knowledge for any sphere of life."[1] Just as the rationalist makes reason absolutely and everywhere authoritative, so the fideist makes Christian revelation absolutely and everywhere authoritative. Reason and revelation thus become entirely and completely opposed to one another. While the position of the rationalist is conceivably defensible, the position of the radical fideist is obviously contrary to sound judgment and common sense. "Does anyone seriously maintain that all questions in mathematics, physics, biology, and astronomy are 'answered in the Word of God?'"[2] Such a view would be absurd, for all such things belong to "the sphere of that which man 'knows of himself', or which he can learn by himself, with the aid of purely natural human methods."[3] Brunner proposes to stake out a position between the two extremes of viewpoint. This he assays to do by setting up a "law of closeness of relation" enunciated

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1. B., Revelation and Reason, p. 378.
2. Ibidem.
3. Ibid., p. 380.

in terms of a "proportional statement":

> The nearer anything lies to that center of existence where we are concerned with the whole, that is with man's relation to God and the being of the person, the greater is the disturbance of rational knowledge by sin; the further anything lies from this center, the less is the disturbance felt, and the less difference is there between knowing as a believer or an unbeliever.[1]

Thus there are gradations of the intensity of sin's disturbance between acquiring a knowledge of mathematics and acquiring a knowledge of God, with this disturbance at an absolute minimum in the former and at an absolute maximum in the latter. And while "the word 'Christian' suggests the way in which rational knowledge is corrected by the knowledge of faith . . . in the case of the idea of God it is not merely a case of correction, but of a complete substitution of the one for the other."[2] In other words, there are varying degrees of autonomy of the reason with respect to worldly matters, as worldly matters, "but the more we are concerned with the world as God's Creation, the less autonomy is left to the reason."[3] Furthermore -- and Brunner is very emphatic in affirming the thesis of the first part of his book -- the Christian concept of God "remains wholly bound up with revelation, and . . . it can

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1. B., Revelation and Reason, p. 383.
2. Ibidem.
3. Ibid., p. 384.

be rightly understood . . . only in faith."[1] This conception "is and remains suprarational" and in the most unqualified way "the Being of God is 'revealed Being'."[2]

Every systematic theologian, then, is actually playing a dual role: "He is a theologian in so far as he is occupied with the problems that are raised directly by the message of the Bible; he is philosopher in so far as he is occupied with the problems that are in the background of Biblical revelation."[3] The philosopher to whom Brunner consistently refers is the Christian philosopher. His philosophical activity is both possible and necessary, since Christians are everlastingly obliged to think. The real obstructionist in this activity must be identified: "It is not reason, but rationalism, that makes Christian philosophy appear impossible."[4] Moreover, it must be indelibly set down that the Christian always "philosophizes from that point at which God's revelation sets him."[5] Brunner is now prepared to summarize what he considers to be the true relationship of theology and philosophy:

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1. B., Revelation and Reason, p. 388. Italics mine.

2. Ibidem.

3. Ibid., p. 390.

4. Ibid., p. 392. Cf. B., The Divine Imperative, p. 89: "It is not the existence of the reason which is in opposition to God, but only the perversion of reason from a reason which is founded on God to one which is based on itself."

5. Ibid., p. 393.

> They both stand under Christ, the one in an inner, and the other in an outer, circle; the one with the task of understanding the message of Jesus Christ in its inmost depths of meaning, and thus of purifying the proclamation of the Gospel and ever anew basing it upon the Word of revelation; the other with the task of making clear the truth of faith in order to throw light on the problems of Christians living in the world, and to help them deal with these problems in a creative way.[1]

It is apparent both in Nature and Grace and in the later Revelation and Reason that Brunner feels he has delineated a theological position that both avoids the error of rationalism and also saves him from the Barthian pitfall of "radical fideism." He would have it clearly understood that he does not intend to truckle one whit to natural theology (theologia naturalis), but at the same time he wants to invest with genuine meaningfulness the evangelical idea that man is a responsible creature before God. Though his negations with respect to natural theology would seem to rule out any real significance in the existence of general revelation, Brunner seeks to maintain this significance on several grounds. Scriptural testimony (Barth to the contrary) is irrefutably in support of a revelation in creation. It is only over against such a revelation, with its implication of some sort of universal knowledge of God, that all men can be adjudged to be sinners -- a basic Christian tenet. Furthermore, the inditing of a Christian

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1. B., Revelation and Reason, p. 396.

ethic involves a recognition of the commandment of God and "the orders of creation" -- vital elements in a general revelation.[1]

The earlier theological posture of the Zürich professor -- a posture which to his later, though unadmitted, discomfiture was too conformable to that of Karl Barth -- is well illustrated in The Divine Imperative. In this important work, published in 1932 under the title of Das Gebot und die Ordnungen, Brunner vigorously attacks philosophical ethics and emphasizes that while the Christian ethic may be presented scientifically, such a presentation "can never represent the Good as a general truth, easy to be perceived, and based on a universal principle."[2] To do so would be to act treasonably toward the Christian Faith, since it is only in faith that the Good can be recognized. The alleged goodness of the natural man is not true goodness, for "the Good must descend from above, not be striven for from below, otherwise it lacks genuineness and depth."[3] It must be further stated that the Christian ethic "can be

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1. B., The Divine Imperative, pp. 220ff. Cf. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, pp. 24ff.

2. Ibid., p. 89.

3. Ibid., p. 163. Brunner becomes even more explicit as he further declares, "the Good can never be a natural fact. . . . The secret of being good . . . lies neither in the act of the will, nor in the fact of natural birth, but in the new birth."

scientific solely and simply if it represents its own subject in a strictly objective, orderly process of reflection, and in a method which is suitable to its subject and precisely not after the pattern of a causal (e.g. that which was presupposed by Spencer) or normative (e.g. that which was presupposed by Kant) science."[1] For Brunner, the revelation of the Word of God as perceived by faith must be the ground for a valid Christian ethic. While he does admit "the possibility of a philosophical ethic based on revelation,"[2] he immediately counters that "I must confess that I simply cannot imagine a philosophical ethic which would deal with revelation not as a reality but as a possibility."[3] He believes that existing systems of philosophical ethics deal with revelation as a possibility, not as a reality, and attacks them accordingly.

Brunner believes that reason has a legitimate service to perform with respect to faith. He explains this service as follows:

> Theological reflection . . . is intended to serve the purpose of making a distinction between the valid and the genuine, and the non-valid and the non-genuine; . . . its aim is also to transcend the remoteness of the Biblical witness to revelation and to make this intelligible; . . . finally its

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1. B., The Divine Imperative, p. 90. Parenthetical inclusions mine.

2. Ibidem.

3. Ibidem.

> aim is to bridge the gulf between secular and natural knowledge and the knowledge of faith.[1]

The contingent factor in the connection of reason with faith is the reality of person and personality both finite and infinite. In what he regards as full subscription to his cardinal principle of "truth as encounter", Brunner observes that revelation "in the New Testament faith is the relation between person and person, the obedient trust of man in the God who graciously stoops to meet him."[2] Between God and man there is a two-sided but never interchangeable relationship:

> The relation of God to man is clearly primary, creative, and without presuppositions . . . And, contrariwise, man's relation to God is secondary: it is consequent upon and determined by the already existing relation between God and man, established through no human effort.[3]

The emphasis is heavily laid on the God-side of the two-sided relationship. "The initiative . . . is taken by God,"[4] which essentially means to Brunner that "God calls man into existence out of nothingness, even though in doing so He uses material which He has prepared previously."[5] This is no overstatement, he believes, since the Bible

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 64.
2. B., Revelation and Reason, p. 9.
3. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 33.
4. Ibidem.
5. Ibidem.

teaches specifically a one-sided relation between God and man. That is to say, the fundamental viewpoint of Scripture is that "man can know God only as God gives himself to be known", and even "that man can know God only because and in so far as he is known by God."[1] It is thus that the Bible underscores God's unconditional priority in His relationship to man.

In the thought of Brunner the faith-relationship, which originates with God and rests primarily with Him, is made effectual in the moment of encounter wherein man is forced into decision, wherein he recognizes the contradictions resident in his creaturehood and becomes aware that the Eternal has entered time. On the one hand, in the faith-encounter man becomes aware that he has individuality as a human being and that this individuality is neither comparable to, nor comprehended by, another human being. On the other hand, he is reminded that he is a human creature with a physical body and existence like all other human creatures. Caught in the tension of this situation his reason seeks to give an objective and coherent interpretation, while his faith, contingent upon decision, is expressing itself as a subjective appropriation of a relationship to the Eternal. At the same time

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1. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 34. Cf. The Mediator: "Through God alone can God be known" (p. 21).

that man grasps the claim that God is in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, he is made keenly aware of, and tempted to deny, the contradictions in his life. As Brunner explains it:

> [Man is] the little creature who is for ever seeking himself, and therefore also fleeing from himself; one who is for ever being drawn and attracted by something higher, and yet is ever seeking to release himself from this higher element; the creature who is both aware of his contradiction and at the same time denies it.[1]

Despite man's paradoxical situation which is brought home to his consciousness in the faith-encounter, "knowledge and act, knowing and happening, are in this instance a single precess."[2] Faith asserts itself as an act, a response of the total self to the self-disclosure of God in Jesus Christ, to the "Thou" who wills fellowship with man. This faith is given by the "Thou" or the Person -- God -- whom man encounters, and this encounter centers in Jesus Christ. "The Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ Himself, takes possession of our hearts and Himself makes His home there."[3] Brunner holds that "in this paradoxical unity of Word and Spirit, of historical revelation and God's contemporary presence, of 'Christ for us' and 'Christ in us'"[4]

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1. B., Man In Revolt, pp. 24-25.
2. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 45.
3. Ibid., p. 20.
4. Ibidem.

lies the secret and the power of the Reformation. Then and always, in the encounter with God in and through Christ, where the dialectic between sin and grace, law and gospel, creation and redemption come into focus -- there the dialectic of human existence between responsible and irresponsible living, fulfillment and frustration, hope and despair, godliness and bestiality is comprehended.

Brunner constructively utilizes the category of "person" in reference to God and man, which in turn supports his theological principle wherein "faith is knowledge as encounter"[1] between Person and person, and person and Person. Through and in encounter of persons, revelation, "the foundation and the norm of all the knowledge of faith"[2] takes place. This involves whole persons in relationship and therefore involves reason.

> This critical self-examination of the Church's claim to revelation . . . includes . . . the continual relation to each other of the divine revelation and the human . . . reason. . . . In revelation the unconditioned and the conditioned subjects, the Absolute, the Infinite, and the creaturely spirit meet. Therefore revelation always passes through a process of understanding by man. . . . That is the reason why genuine theology must be dialectical. It is always a conversation between God and man, in which the human partner in the conversation is not ignored, but, even though he is entirely receptive, he is apprehended with his whole

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1. B., Revelation and Reason, p. 9.

2. Ibid., p. 12.

> nature. It is . . . the characteristic element in the Biblical revelation that although all salvation is ascribed to "grace alone", man . . . is always treated as a responsible subject; thus revelation does not extinguish the human reason, but claims it wholly for this process of reception.[1]

On the one hand Brunner is ready to emphasize strongly that there are positive relations between revelation and reason and that "whoever studies theology -- even if on the most conservative lines -- always and inevitably stands on that borderline where there is intercourse between the knowledge of faith and the knowledge of reason."[2] However, he wants it clearly understood that in this position there is no faintest whisper of compromise with his original and thoroughly Barthian premise that revealed knowledge is at the opposite end of the pole from rational knowledge, indeed that the "two forms of knowledge are as far from each other as heaven is from earth."[3] Within the framework of the dialectical principle and of his theological principle of truth as encounter, Brunner assays to make two assertions meaningfully and with legitimate freedom: the assertion that human reason is a trooper in the Christian cause and the assertion that reason is a traitor in the same camp.

The implemental principles he commends will, in

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1. B., Revelation and Reason, pp. 15-16.

2. Ibid., p. 16.

3. Ibidem.

Brunner's opinion, take the modern theologian beyond the limitation in the watchword of the Scholastics: credo ut intelligam. While this principle was in the realm of "ideas" his principle of truth as encounter is in the inclusive realm of "persons" involving "acts of Knowledge" as well as ideas.[1] He believes that the problem of the historically competing tendencies of Objectivism and Subjectivism is resolved by resorting to the ground-principle of Begegnung between ultimate Truth (God) and man in communion. Furthermore, this communion is God's holy love revealed in a special way in the person of Jesus Christ received by unredeemed man in faith -- an act of knowledge.

The theological presuppositions and methodology in the thought of Emil Brunner have woven themselves into the fabric of the foregoing exposition. In order to understand his Christological thought these must be understood. Their specific meaning in relation to certain aspects of Christology will become evident as Brunner's concepts of the person and work of Christ are expounded. His brief summary statement regarding the task of dogmatics sheds much light upon his theological methodology:

> It is not the mistress, but the servant of faith ... its service is no less, but also no more than the service of thought to faith. Its high dignity consists in the fact that it is service to the highest

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1. B., Revelation and Reason, p. 17.

> final truth, to that truth which is the same as true love, and it is this which gives it the highest place in the realm of thought. But the fact that it is no more than this service of thought -- which, as such, does not maintain that love and loyalty which must be expected from the Christian, as its limitation; a dogmatic which is aware of this, shows it is genuine.[1]

In the prayerful spirit of the humble and contrite Publican whose deportment he commends to every theologian worthy of the name, Brunner proceeds to develop his understanding of "truth as encounter" in its relation to each dimension of Christology, constantly acknowledging his reasoned thought to be a servant of Christian faith, the fundamental prerequisite of Christian knowledge of truth.

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 85.

2. The Person of Jesus Christ

Before dealing with the various aspects of the doctrine of the Person of Christ in the thought of Emil Brunner, it should be pointed out that his Christology is developed from the perspectives of revelation, faith and reason (in the service of faith) as these perspectives have been previously explained. He believes that the "Word made flesh" -- Jesus Christ who is the "special" and "material" revelation -- is the core of the Scriptures which bear fundamental witness to Him.[1] It is to the Scriptures therefore that he turns as the source and norm for his development of Christological doctrine. According to Brunner,

> The God of the Bible is a God who speaks, and the Word of the Bible is the Word of this God. The "formal principle", the Word of God, and the "material principle", redemption through Jesus Christ or justification by faith alone, are not two but one and the same principle seen in two aspects.[2]

By "principle" he means his theological principle of revelation and faith implying his central concept of revelation as "truth as encounter." "Revelation and faith -- this is our principal article of belief which

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1. B., Revelation and Reason, pp. 8ff.
2. B., Truth as Encounter, p. 87.

determines all else -- are personal encounter."[1] Brunner does not believe that any interpretation of the person and work of Christ can be true and adequate if it is not done in terms of this definition of revelation and unless the interpreter accepts and trusts the reality of such revelation.

In the thought of Brunner God is supreme or ultimate Reality. And this is "God's quality of being Person, revealed in Jesus Christ, [which] is itself of such a nature that it establishes fellowship."[2] It is the being of God revealed in the person and work of Jesus Christ which is to be accepted and trusted by man in faith and which in turn provides this faith in man as a person. This can only come about in man's experience on the basis of personal encounter with God in the Word made flesh. The ultimate Reality thus encountered gives meaning and essence to all contingent realities through the dual concept of what Christ is and what He does.

Faith-encounter is the principle and starting point

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, p. 11. Brunner further declares: "The step forward from the Old Testament to the New consists in this, that the Word of God is no longer 'mere word', but a Person, the Word of God incarnate in Jesus."

2. B., Truth as Encounter, p. 154.

for the development of Brunner's doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ. Faith is therefore a central factor in his thought. For him, "the Christian faith most simply expressed is faith in Jesus Christ."[1] To say this is to mean that Jesus Christ is the content of faith. It must then be clearly understood that "Faith is not primarily faith in something true -- not even in the truth 'that' Jesus is the Son of God; but it is primarily trust in and obedience to this Lord and Redeemer Himself."[2]

That Jesus Christ, the content of faith, is Redeemer becomes of paramount importance in Brunner's more mature Christological construction. To hold this view, he maintains in Truth as Encounter, is to keep on the track of Scriptural revelation:

> The Incarnation as such is not the pivotal point of the Biblical revelation, but rather the work of the Redeemer. Jesus Christ did not come merely to come, but He came to redeem. To be sure, only the

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1. B., Truth as Encounter, p. 153. Cf. B., The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, p. 258: "Faith is the relation to the historical revelation, to Jesus Christ."

2. Ibidem. In his various discussions of faith Brunner rarely misses an opportunity to stress the point that faith is, above everything else, "person" related rather than "fact" related. Cf. Ibid., pp. 110-112. See also B., The Mediator, pp. 153-160; B., The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, p. 230f.

> Incarnate Lord -- very God, very man -- can be the Redeemer. But the Bible guides us to ponder less the secret of the Person of Jesus than the mystery of His work.[1]

Faith therefore means to know Christ's person which "can be discerned from His work . . . a line which has already been traced for us beforehand by one of the most profound statements of Reformation theology: Hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia eius cognoscere."[2] This inductive or a posteriori method of coming to know the person of Christ through His work thus becomes the method employed by Brunner in the development of his own thought, as the content of this dissertation will reveal.

This chapter deals first with the Person and then with the Work of Christ, following the pattern of the Zürich professor in his comprehensive Christological treatise, The Mediator. As in the previous chapter this procedure is being followed because it seems natural and logical to the writer. It is believed that the order of treatment is inconsequential in expounding the thought under consideration. To write, as Brunner does, from a

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1. B., Truth as Encounter, p. 155. This passage reflects a change of emphasis in Brunner's theologizing which will be discussed in the section on "The Work of Jesus Christ."

2. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 271. The citation is from the Introduction of Melanchthon's Loci theologici.

background of experienced redemption and reconciliation means inevitably that the background comes into the foreground when the Person of Christ is being discussed. In evangelical theology the identity of the Subject can scarcely be separated from His activity.

Again following the example set originally in Der Mittler, the present section will be concerned first of all with the Deity of Jesus Christ and then with His humanity. This is the traditional vere Deus, vere homo (God-man and not man-God) sequence, "expressed with lapidary simplicity, for the first time, by the Confessio Augustana."[1] And although Brunner, taking his cue from the inductive methodology of Martin Luther,[2] reverses the

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 357.

2. In the opening paragraph of his chapter on "The Person of Jesus Christ" in Dogmatics: Vol. II, Brunner quotes Martin Luther, his favourite Reformation theologian, as saying: "The Scripture beginneth very gently and leadeth us to Christ as to a man, and after that to a Lord of all Creation, and after that to a God. Thus I come into it gently, and thus I learn to know God. . . . We must begin at the bottom, and afterwards rise to the heights" (p. 322). In Dogmatics: Vol. III the same quotation is given with the reference: Weimarer Ausgabe I, 2, p. 297. In a footnote, after observing that both G. Thomasius and Karl Barth constructed their Dogmatics on a Christological basis, Brunner goes on to remark: "But neither of them does full justice to what Luther means in the sentence quoted above, namely that the starting point should be Christ as a man. In Thomasius this failure is conditioned by the 'latent docetism' of the Church doctrine of the humanity of Jesus,

mode of presentation in his later dogmatic writing, there is no appreciable gain in so doing. In reality, as it is with "Person" and "Work", so it is with "Deity" and "Humanity" from the evangelical point of view. There is here a necessary and inevitable correlation of categories that makes nonsense of any quibbling over priorities. As Brunner eventually says: "We only see Him aright as He really is when, while insisting He is 'True God', we do not forget . . . that at the same time He is 'True Man'."[1]

i. The Concept of the Deity of Jesus Christ

Emil Brunner believes that the event of the Incarnation, in which God became man or the "Word became flesh", is utterly unique. However, in this usage, i.e. as it applies to Jesus Christ, "uniqueness" is a term requiring exact definition:

> His uniqueness is something quite different from that which the modern man means when he uses the word "uniqueness." For uniqueness in the modern sense means something relative and gradual, "the uniqueness" of the primus inter pares. Here, however, there is no idea of a primus inter pares, but of One who is essentially the only One, the μονογενὴς υἱός, who can have no equal, whose

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in Karl Barth by his beginning with the doctrine of the Trinity, i.e. 'from above' instead of 'from below'" (p. 236).

1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 357.

uniqueness lies in His very nature.[1]

Such an interpretation leaves no room whatsoever for any idea of relativity. "Jesus, the Human, is fundamentally in contrast to all which is otherwise called human, to all which has come to pass before Him or after Him on the human side, to all morality and religion."[2] It is entirely off-beam, Brunner holds, to relegate Him to the category of mere Idea. All speculative and rationalistic approaches to the understanding of His Person must be ruled out. "Jesus cannot be found through reflection."[3] It also completely misses the mark to reduce Him to the category of mere man. The highest Humanistic conception of Christ as the "firstborn among many brethren" will never do, nor will the idea of Jesus as the Founder of Christianity. "This Jesus is no man as we are."[4] To fall into either

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 240. Throughout his Christological writing Brunner shows great appreciation for the uniqueness and the once-for-all-ness in Jesus Christ as will be further noted.

2. B., Die Absolutheit Jesu, Berlin: Furche-Verlag 1926, p. 14. Translation mine, as are the other quotes from this source. Reckoning with the fact that Relativity dominates the temper of the modern mind, Brunner seeks in this brochure to present Jesus Christ as the Absolute in the midst of the relative, the one in whom "God speaks to men and deals with men as He has never spoken or dealt before" (p. 15).

3. Ibid., p. 9.

4. Ibid., p. 11.

the speculative or the humanistic error of estimation is to invalidate the very essence of this truly unique and historical revelation.

(1) The Incarnation: The Self-Movement of God

Brunner takes the very firm position that the Incarnation can be understood only in the faith-Begegnung. It is here alone that God, in His self-movement, makes Himself known to the individual believer. He reveals to man the mystery that at one point in history the borderline between Creator and creature was crossed when "it pleased God to identify Himself with a definite, localized finite given entity . . . Jesus of Nazareth."[1] This coming and this identification must be understood in the Biblical illumination of the human situation and the divine purpose determined by it.

> We can only really understand what the Bible means by the coming of God, and this unique event, when we interpret it from the point of view of the presupposition of the Bible itself. The presupposition of this movement is the gulf between God and man, the abyss which lies between the holy God and the sinful creature. The Incarnation of the Son of God is determined by sin. God comes. He must "come." He will come, because the creature has turned away from Him.[2]

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 262.

2. B., The Mediator, p. 291.

In the act of the "Word made flesh" God in self-movement bridged the chasm between time and eternity, finiteness and infinity, the human and the divine -- most supremely and precisely, between His own holiness and man's sinfulness.

According to Brunner, the Biblical proclamation of the coming of holy God to sinful man and the Biblical affirmation of the absolute unchangeable being of God are completely congruous. As he explains in the first volume of his Dogmatics, the fact that there has ever been a problem in this connection arises from the abstract idea of the undifferentiated Absolute which for so long dominated theological thought.[1] When this rigid idea is equated with the Being of the God of revelation it becomes an instrument of total negation -- used by such a thinker as D. F. Strauss -- against the Biblical teaching of the down-coming love and mercy of God in Christ Jesus. The secret of the congruency of unchangeableness and movement in the divine Being resides in the fact that "the God of Christian faith, the Three in One, the Living God is in Himself motion, because in His very Nature He is Love."[2]

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of God, pp. 293-294.
2. B., The Mediator, p. 285.

This Love which cannot deny itself by being "static" is a love which "constitutes the very essence of God."[1] Thus the redemptive mission of holy loving God does not do violence to the concept of the divine immutability. Or, to state the matter positively, it can be said with perfect propriety that "in the Son, as the Son, God is the self-moved, the God who Himself descends into the world."[2]

In his discussion of the Incarnation, Brunner sees the development of the doctrine of the Virgin Birth as an obvious attempt to explain biologically how God who comes down to man can come as the Eternal Son.[3] The affirmation

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 285. Cf. B., The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 294: "If there be no 'motus' in God, then there is neither wrath nor love in God."

2. Ibid., p. 286.

3. Ibid., pp. 322-327. Cf. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, pp. 352-356. This is a doctrine which receives no little attention from Brunner and over which he carries on a running argument with Karl Barth. The latter, in his Church Dogmatics (Vol. I, 2nd half-volume. Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1956), strongly disagrees with Brunner's contention that the Virgin Birth is meant to be a "biological interpretation" of the How of the Incarnation. If this were true Barth himself, in loyalty to his theological presupposition of complete discontinuity between the natural and supernatural, would of course be forced to stand with Brunner. The criticism which he directs against his opponent's objection to the disputed doctrine ends on a stern note: "Brunner's denial of the Virgin Birth is bad business. . . . It throws an ambiguous light over the whole of his Christology"(p. 184).

that Jesus was "born of the Virgin Mary" in the so-called "Apostles'" Creed is a demonstration of a vain and unseemly inquisitiveness as to the ways of God which are past finding out. Furthermore, there is a strong trait of docetism in this idea in that it does violence to the true Humanity of Christ. Brunner inquires rhetorically: "Is a man who is born without a human father a 'true man'? Does he not lack the most essential thing for a human being, the fact that he has been born in exactly the same way as we all are?"[1] And again, this ancient article of faith is established upon a shaky Scriptural foundation. Matthew and Luke, who provide the "proof texts" for the controversial doctrine, know nothing at all of an Eternal Son. When they began their story Christological thought had not matured to this extent.

> The starting-point of their narrative is that stage in the growth of Christology in which the thought of the "Eternal Son" and of the "Incarnation" had not yet become explicit. But they were evidently already aware of the necessity to say something about the origin of the Son of God, Jesus Christ. Their idea of a parthenogenesis is an attempt to answer this question of "whence", and an attempt to interpret the "I am come" of Jesus.[2]

Brunner calls attention to the patent fact that the idea that Jesus, the Son of God, was born of a virgin

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 355.

2. Ibid., p. 352f.

plays no part at all in the teaching and preaching of the Apostles. "None of them says anything about 'how' the Incarnation took place: they simply witness to the fact of the Incarnation."[1] On the other hand, the birth accounts given by Matthew and Luke deal exclusively with the origin of the Person of Jesus Christ. The later reading of the doctrine of the Incarnation of the Eternal Son into the introductory sections of the first and third Gospels was "an attempt on the part of the Church to 'harmonize' its doctrines; as if this part of the Gospel record were only concerned to explain how the Eternal Son of God could become man."[2] Such theological adaptation finds little favor with Brunner who notes a continuing tension between the two doctrines -- the one declaring the primary miracle of the Incarnation, the other declaring a secondary "biological" miracle in a negative relationship to the first. "We cannot believe in the divinity of Jesus as the Eternal Son of God on account of, but only in spite of,

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 351. Cf. B., I Believe in the Living God. In this book of sermons on the Apostles' Creed, Brunner writes of the witness of Paul to the Incarnation in Galations 4:4-7 and includes the comment: "The apostle does not speak of a virgin either here or anywhere else. He does not want to emphasize what distinguished Jesus from us, but rather what makes Him like us: birth and law" (p. 55).

2. Ibid., p. 352.

the doctrine of the Virgin Birth."[1] To state the matter categorically, "All depends upon the miracle of the Incarnation of the Son of God -- in the strictly Pauline and Johannine sense; but nothing depends upon the manner in which it took place."[2] As might be expected from the foregoing explication, Brunner, in summarizing his understanding of the meaning of the Incarnation, turns to the views of the Apostles, though, at the last, he is willing to concede a limited value to the concept of parthenogenesis:

> The great, unthinkable, unimaginable miracle of the Incarnation which the Apostles proclaim, is not that the Son of God was born as the son of a virgin, but that the Eternal Son of God, who from all eternity was in the bosom of the Father, uncreated, Himself proceeding from the Being of God Himself, became Man; that He, the eternal and personal Word of God, meets us in Jesus Christ as man, of our flesh and blood, as our Lord, who in His existence manifests to us the Being of His Father, and as the Redeemer, in whom we have reconciliation and free access to God and are true sons of God, if we believe in Him. In spite of this, it cannot be denied that the idea of parthenogenesis does express an important religious idea: Jesus IS "by nature" God, He receives His divine authority not through divine inspiration but He possesses it in His Nature.[3]

To what degree is the knowledge of God dependent

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 355.

2. B., The Mediator, p. 326.

3. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 356.

upon the Incarnation? Brunner is both succinct and explicit: "The personal God can be known only in His personal revelation and His personal revelation is the incarnation of the Word."[1] It is here that "His quality of being person and . . . His will to fellowship"[2] are revealed. This is true because love and self-communication are qualities of personhood, qualities evident in "that love which through all eternity the Father has for the Son, and the Son for the Father."[3] In the Incarnation the grace and truth of God are manifested. "Truth like grace is encounter between God and man; grace and truth came into being in Jesus Christ."[4] Not only are these two entities made known in the Incarnation of the Son, but in Him their real intentionality comes to fruition. "Jesus Christ not only reveals, He at once fulfills and realizes the will of God."[5] He is the revelation of God to redeemed persons through their faith-encounter with Himself. "The God who is apprehended in Christ through faith . . . in [the] movement of self-communication . . . wills to communicate

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1. B., Truth as Encounter, p. 154. Cf. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 348f; B., The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, p. 370; B., The Scandal of Christianity, p. 74.

2. Ibidem.

3. Ibidem.

4. Ibidem.

5. Ibidem.

Himself perfectly in His love."[1]

With reference to the Incarnation and its relationship to an "eternal purpose" for the world, Brunner sees the closest possible connection.

> The incarnation of the Son is not only redemptive fact, but at the same time . . . the divine realization of the eternal purpose to comprehend the universe in Christ as its head. We may not divide the nature from the will of God. . . . His will is His nature; and His nature, His will. . . . and what is meant by His will can be briefly stated: the Kingdom of God, revealed and grounded in the incarnate Son.[2]

It can be said with further emphasis that "Jesus Christ must be thought of as the highest revelation of the will of God to realize His rule as a rule of love, and not merely as the bringer of salvation."[3] To speak of God the Creator is to be speaking also of His will which is the Kingdom of God grounded and revealed in the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ. Following logically his view of God wherein His will and His creatorhood are a unity in His Being or Person, and understanding His will to be the Kingdom of God, Brunner concludes that in the incarnate Son the beginning and fulfillment of the Kingdom is reality.

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, p. 341.

2. B., Truth as Encounter, p. 154f.

3. B., The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, p. 204.

Moreover, the power of this Kingdom is extended through the faith-encounter of man with the incarnate Son.

(2) The Eternal Godhead of the Son

In introducing this aspect of the divine nature of Christ, Brunner again quotes Luther: "And finally to Jesus as to a God . . ."[1] This immediately intimates his affirmation of the pre-existence and eternality of Christ as the Son of God, co-eternal with the Father.

> In Jesus we meet Him who is endowed in His Person with the divine authority of revelation, with reconciling redeeming power and with divine Lordship. Jesus is the Man in whom God Himself meets us as the One who reveals Himself, as the Reconciler, and as the Lord personally present.[2]

This is a disturbing mystery, even to unbelievers. However, it "becomes evident to faith as the mystery of the divine and human Subject in the action and speech, in the suffering and in the death of Jesus."[3] Brunner supports his explanation of the meaning of the eternal Godhead of the Son by using as a point of reference the Scriptural text: "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself."[4] Pressing for an evangelical understanding of a

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 340.

2. Ibid., p. 342.

3. Ibid., pp. 342-343.

4. Ibid., p. 343. (II Corinthians 5:19).

somewhat obscure confession, he rejects several defective theories and doctrines that have cropped up from time to time in the history of the Church.[1] Adoptionism is the first to receive his veto. Pauline writings, in Brunner's opinion, tend to refute this doctrine rather than support it. The ground for its refutation lies in the fact that such a view would place Jesus "on a level with Old Testament prophets."[2] While this estimate is high, it is not high enough. "There is no higher category than the prophetic category, save that which (by its very nature) is exhausted in one solitary example . . . the Mediator, the Reconciler, the Son of God."[3] Adoptionism defines the pre- and post-resurrection activity of Jesus as different in kind and as lacking in unity, which is not true according to Brunner's interpretation of Scripture.

Also on the proscribed list of this theologian is the Sabellian doctrine which, when it ignores the difference between God the Father and God the Son, is tantamount to a "Patripassian" understanding of Jesus from which he strongly recoils. "We can well understand the

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, pp. 343-349.

2. Ibid., p. 344.

3. B., The Mediator, p. 240. Cf. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 335.

horror which the Patripassian heresy aroused in the Church."[1] In The Mediator Brunner identifies another dangerous form of Sabellianism in present-day thinking which "desires to free us from the difficulties of the 'Two Natures' doctrine and from the doctrine of the Trinity."[2] While a "clear and simple" theology is produced, a very high price is paid for this advantage. "For this theory weakens and modifies the fact of Christ till it becomes merely semi-divine, merely a human event of a very remarkable character."[3] When a choice must be made between rational clarity and paradox, Brunner does not hesitate. He definitely sides with thinkers such as Athanasius and Basil, "because they found that these contradictory statements expressed the fundamental paradox that God became man . . . the Holy of Holies of the Christian Faith."[4] Sabellianism like Adoptionism, though in a different way, nullifies the unity of "revelation-authority" and the Person. Revelation becomes a mere symbol and Jesus is revelation in a relative rather than in an absolute sense.

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 346.

2. B., The Mediator, p. 278.

3. Ibidem.

4. Ibidem.

Turning to Arianism, Brunner expresses entire approval of the condemnation of this heresy by all the eminent Church Fathers. But he also calls attention to the fact that this doctrinal deviation can appeal to a number of passages of Scripture for support. "These are all passages which teach a subordination of the Son to the Father, and indeed suggest that the Son arose out of the Father."[1] In addition to this acknowledgment, it must be further granted that the relation of subordination is to be found even in the classical doctrine of the Church. However, there is really no reason for uneasiness on the part of the faithful. The Church, on sound Biblical authority, "provides against Arian 'subordinationism' by the distinction: not created but begotten, not a creature, but God from all eternity, of the very nature of God."[2] According to Brunner, "It belongs to the very nature of the incarnate Logos, to the very nature of the Son who goes through the world in the form of a servant, that He should subordinate Himself to the Father."[3] The concept of subordination thus relates to the humanity of Jesus Christ rather than to His Deity.

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 347.

2. Ibidem.

3. B., The Mediator, p. 353.

Having dealt with the "negations", Brunner turns to a more positive presentation and joins the Fathers in grounding his view of the Eternal Godhead of the Son in the unity of His person and work.

> God alone can reconcile the sinful creature with Himself. . . . If Jesus be really Reconciler and Lord, then He is God. Faith knows that this is what He is. "God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself." . . . . This is the very heart of the truth of Jesus as the Christ, that in Him God really meets us, and that this meeting with God is itself based upon the personal being of Jesus, and is one with Him.[1]

As faith encounters God in the person and work of Jesus Christ, it meets more than man. The truth which then -- and only then -- becomes apparent to faith is that: "This Person, in spite of the fact that He meets us as a human person, is at the same time divine Person, the Son from all eternity, the 'Son of the same substance with the Father', and yet distinct from the Father."[2] In this

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 348-349.

2. Ibid., p. 349. Brunner's acceptance of the creedal formula that the Son is "of the same substance with the Father" needs some clarification and a footnote in The Mediator is helpful. Referring to Luther's expression that Christ is "naturally God", Brunner says: "We might here use the word 'substance' were it not for the fact that it is burdened with as naturalistic a sense as the word 'Nature'. To the early Fathers 'substance' meant nothing material, but the subject of the predicates which is not absorbed into the predicates" (p. 245). Later usage of the term "substance", e.g. in The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 357, should be under-

declaration Brunner is not presuming to solve the mystery of the eternal Godhead of the Son, Jesus Christ. He frankly states that "this is the mystery of Jesus, of the Man whom we meet in the pages of the Gospels, that in Him we meet the Man in whom God Himself meets us."[1] Brunner holds that man meets Christ and knows Him to be what He truly is in the experience of faith-encounter. In this encounter man experiences Christ both as co-eternal with the Father and as the second Person of the Trinity. In the salvation which he receives from God through Christ's work of revelation, reconciliation, and in His royal work as Lord, man comes to know Jesus Christ as the eternal Son.[2] Jesus does not first become God's Son and then reveal God as Father. That He reveals God the Father is

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stood with this explication in mind. Actually "essence" with its "verbal" and functional significance is preferred over "substance" and Brunner declares in The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation: "We are not concerned with the substance of the Son, but with His function" (p. 443).

1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 349.

2. Ibid., pp. 334-340. In these pages Brunner gathers up -- and mostly repeats -- what has been more elaborately set forth in the preceding chapter on "The Saving Work of God in Jesus Christ" under the venerable rubric of the Threefold Office. The object here is to show how the "action" of Prophet, Priest and King determines the identity of the "Person" of Jesus Christ.

due to His being the eternal Son of God. He simply is what He is and does what He does as the God-Man whom faith comes to know in encounter.

> In His revealing, reconciling, redeeming and royal work we feel compelled to express the mystery of His divine Person. Because He reveals God to us, as no human being could reveal Him, because He reconciles us to God as no human being could reconcile us to God, because He makes us trustful servants of God, as no human being could do, we know that we must confess Him to be the God-Man.[1]

It is the invariable position of Brunner that "the question concerning the Person of Christ is not a historical (geschichtliche) question but one of faith."[2] This viewpoint is to be understood in the light of the meaning of revelation as expounded in the previous section on "Presuppositions and Methodology". For Brunner, revelation in relation to its origin and goal is the unity of Urgeschichte, primordial history, and Endgeschichte, the consummation of history.[3] However, in terms of its actuality, i.e. event or act in which it is actualized in and throughout history, revelation is Geschichte. In defining the relationship between the two as manifested in the eternal Son, he says:

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 340.

2. B., Die Absolutheit Jesu, p. 13.

3. B., The Philosophy of Religion, pp. 123-127.

> The eternal as an event, the revelation, as such, possesses no historical extension. The eternal in history, the revelation as the absolutely unique, cannot be perceived in terms of historical extension. Revelation is not the actual fact which is made known through history: the life of Jesus and the historical personality of Jesus -- but the invisible secret of the Person of Jesus, hidden behind the veils of history and of human life, not the Christ after the flesh but the Christ after the Spirit, the "Word made flesh."[1]

What is here declared is that Christ either has a paradoxical relationship to the absolutely unique Event of Revelation, which has to do with Geschichte, or He has little to do with it at all. With Brunner it is the former.

> The Word is the Word of the Beginning, "before" all history, and that of the End which lies "behind" all history. All history seeks for that which takes place in Jesus Christ, and is "here." Hence, it means the fulfilment of history. But all history too flees from that which is "present" in Jesus, and therefore it means the abrogation of history.[2]

While this is not at all logical to reason, to faith it is "truth revealed in encounter" wherein Jesus Christ is met and experienced as co-eternal with the Father, as the beginning, centre and goal of history. In spite of his pronounced aversion to metaphysics, at this point Brunner's thought can only be interpreted ontologically.

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 305.

2. Ibidem.

The meaning of the eternal Godhead of the Son, as he understands it, can be summarized in Brunner's words in which he reaffirms the beliefs of the Apostles:

> Jesus can only be the true Revealer, Reconciler, and Lord, if He is "from above", from the sphere of true transcendence, from the uncreated sphere, from God, and this transcendence, this absolute authority is vested in His Person. Hence, this Person, in spite of the fact that He meets us as a human person, is at the same time divine Person, the Son from all eternity, the Son "of the same substance with the Father", and yet distinct from the Father. This is what John teaches, and this is also . . . what Paul teaches, and . . . what was . . . implicit in the very earliest confession of faith: Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, the Lord.[1]

Only in the dialectic of faith-encounter can the truth of the Godhead be comprehended.

(3) The Relation of Jesus Christ to God

In entering upon this phase of the discussion of the Person of Jesus Christ, it is well to note that Brunner uses the name "Jesus" and the title "Christ" interchangeably and with freedom. This must be attributed to his understanding of the unity of "Person" and "work", of "Deity" and "humanity" in the one God-man, Jesus Christ.

In the preceding exposition of the eternal Godhead of the Son, the relationship of Christ to God was included to a certain extent. However, further clarification of

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 349.

this relationship is here in order. Utilizing the central category of Person in relation to Christ, Brunner makes the positive assertion that "His Person is not the transparent veil through which gleams the divine, but He is Himself the Divine; hence He is not that which is divine, but God."[1] As a truly "orthodox" theologian, Brunner will have nothing to do with any doctrine which says that the God-man attained or had bestowed upon Himself the divine nature or quality through some event in His life, such as His baptism or resurrection. All that faith can say is that through His work and Person He is experienced to be One of such authority and power in holy love that He must needs be God. More than that remains the mystery of His Person. "The mystery of His Person consists precisely in this, that He is of a different origin from ourselves, that He is 'from above'."[2] And this is to say that: "The mystery of the Person, authority, the dimension behind history . . . is what is meant in the Christian faith by the deity of the Person of Christ."[3] To someone without faith Christ becomes Jesus, merely a human being; whereas, perceived in the faith-encounter,

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 274.
2. Ibid., p. 272.
3. Ibidem.

He is known, trusted and obeyed as the Person who is the eternal Son of God. He is the content of Revelation which is actualized in His humanity. According to Brunner, Christ the Revealer, and God, the One who is revealed, have the same identity and yet they are different; they are co-eternal and yet they are not without distinction.

> That which is revealed and the Revealer are identical, it is true, and yet there is a distinction. There is One who reveals and One who is revealed. They are identical, they are one and the same, the One God. But God, in so far as He reveals Himself, is yet different from that which is revealed, otherwise revelation would not be a real happening. The divine authority of the Revealer is the personal authority of God. There is no other authority. And yet the Revealer does not stand merely on the same side as God, the revealed, but at the same time He stands "alongside" Him as the Revealer of that which otherwise is not revealed.[1]

Rejecting a metaphysical explanation of the relationship existent within the Godhead, the most that Brunner will say is that man in confronting the Incarnate Son finds Him to be a person with the authority characteristic of God. Appealing to logic and utilizing the categories of "Revealer" and "that which is revealed", he attempts to throw light on the relation that Christ bears to the first person of the Trinity. Actually, this remains a mystery, as he very readily admits. Although he refers

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 275.

to the doctrine of the Triune God in his attempted clarification, little is accomplished by this recourse. This is largely due to his insufficient treatment of the Holy Spirit -- "the question of the Holy Spirit can only be mentioned in passing."[1] Of the Trinity -- which tends to become binary in his thinking -- Brunner does assert that it expresses a truth that is the "real doctrine" of the Church, namely:

> The Word, the process of self-communication, exists eternally in God Himself. When God reveals His being to the world as One who gives himself, as Love, this is what He is in Himself, in His very Nature. Therefore also this relation between the Revealer and that which is revealed exists within Himself from all eternity, as the inherent and essential Reality of the Divine Nature. The eternal Logos is that in which God expresses Himself.[2]

Yet, in the final analysis, the trinitarian idea only "suggests an impenetrable mystery."[3] The doctrine is not in any sense an explanation, "but it does intend that nothing pagan or Jewish should be proclaimed instead of the mystery of Christ."[4] Brunner proceeds to elaborate

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 283.

2. Ibid., p. 280f. Cf. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 88.

3. Ibid., p. 275. Brunner does not want to be misunderstood here. "The point is this: We are summoned to stand in humble reverent silence in the presence of a real mystery, not in the presence of an illusion" (Ibid., p. 275f. Italics mine).

4. Ibid., p. 276.

upon this statement by indicating the fallacies in the contrary viewpoints of both ethical and speculative Idealism and of Mysticism. In their efforts to solve the mystery of Christ in His relationship to God, they deny love and personality to God in losing sight of the mystery of Christ's Person as true God and true Man.

Brunner heavily emphasizes the fact that Jesus did not claim to have a word from God, but claimed rather to be the Word; in His very Person rested His authority, that of God Himself.[1] Jesus further claimed to be bringing in the Kingdom of God as a gift in His own Person, and to be Messiah with authority to seek sinners as Forgiver of sins and Revealer of God as Son.[2] With deep conviction Brunner lays down the alternatives: either Jesus was the One whom He claimed to be as the Person of the Logos, the Mediator, the God-man, the Son of God coeternal with the Father, or else He was self-deluded and psychopathic.[3] The experience of faith in encounter confirms Him as the former.

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, pp. 334-336. Cf. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 78.

2. Ibid., pp. 336-340. Cf. B., The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 78.

3. Ibid., p. 326.

Utilizing the principles and categories of modes of existence -- i.e. Revealer, Redeemer, Lord -- Brunner interprets the Person of Jesus Christ who is very God and at the same time different from God. Employing this interpretation of Christ's Person, along with an emphasis on the inevitable element of mystery, Brunner proclaims that Jesus of Nazareth actually is "the personal eternal God" and, as such, the completion of revelation:

> The divine personality, in whom the hidden God makes Himself known unto us, is not a mere prosopon, a mimus theatralis, a transitory phenomenon in the form of God, a transparency, a symbol, but is in itself the personal eternal God. It is this idea which finally completes the Christian conception of revelation.[1]

Hence the deity of Christ is so real that it is both actualized and confronts man in His Person through the faith-encounter; it is so clearly related to God that it means God Himself in the person of the Logos. Man knows this through faith in which he experiences the holy love of God in Christ Jesus.

Brunner does not mean that the full revelation of God culminated in Jesus of Nazareth. "He who reveals to us the True God is indeed wholly God, but this revelation does not exhaust the whole mystery of God."[2] The God-man

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 278.

2. B., The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 225.

was not the terminus of divine revelation. In and through the exalted, living and indwelling Christ, the special revelation of the holy love of God eternally streams forth into human history and society through the experiences of "faith-ful" persons. "For faith is the entrance into the movement of God in Christ, and it must also prove its reality by making sure that this movement actually takes place."[1] In the lives of the faithful, the life, teaching and work of Jesus of Nazareth take on their full finite and infinite, temporal and eternal meaning and significance. The essence and significance of the kerygma come to be truly understood.

(4) The Risen and Exalted Lord

Prior to presenting his view of the resurrected and ascended Christ, Brunner defines the event of the Crucifixion as "the final point of the kenosis of the God-Man . . . where He 'meets' us, . . . takes 'what is ours' upon Himself, in order that 'He may give us Himself'."[2] In this event the Incarnation was completed. In His death on the Cross, Christ, in the likeness of man and self-emptied of all His divine attributes, fell into the abyss that is our deserving and not His. And yet the impotence

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 619.

2. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 363.

He assumed is the spoliatio diaboli, the ruination of the Devil.[1] The self-surrender of the Son of God disarms him. The victorious power of God in the all-pervasive love of Christ overcomes death itself. Furthermore, that which came to pass on Calvary cleared a "place" in the world "where the ban of human sin is broken, where unfettered communion between God and Man can be established."[2] Here in the truest, deepest sense man experiences salvation.

> When we enter this "place" we are free from the accusations of the Law and from its curse, and at the same time we are also set free from the inmost core of resistance against God, from our arrogant self-assertion. . . . . This "place" is the meeting-point of God and man. . . . this means, however, that here, through faith in Jesus Christ the Crucified, man accepts God's judgment on himself, and becomes nothing, and that in faith he believes in God's incomprehensible, self-giving love, manifested in this utmost humiliation.[3]

In this self-humiliation God in Christ causes man to see himself as he really is and to desire to abandon his self-centeredness and live in agape, the love of the holy God in Christ Jesus.

Only in the Resurrection does faith understand the

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 363f.

2. Ibid., p. 364.

3. Ibidem.

Cross as incomplete without the Resurrection. Indeed, "The Cross would not be the Cross of Christ without the Resurrection."[1] The prerequisite to the confession of the Risen Christ as Lord is the paradoxical event of the Cross where "the Incarnation of the Son of God . . . reached its climax."[2] From a worldly perspective, this was the point at which the ministry of Jesus was terminating in failure, but from the perspective of faith the revelation of God in servant form is here fulfilled. At Calvary Christ was simultaneously Victor over the powers of evil that enslave men and over death itself.

Even the Apostles could not sustain their faith-relationship to Christ as Messiah without its Easter confirmation.

> It was the encounter with the Risen Lord which rescued the disciples from their perplexity and helplessness, restored their broken faith, and . . . filled them with jubilant certainty of victory, which was, and remained, the vital element in the Primitive Church, and gave the first Christians the power to be . . . "martyrs" for the truth of Christ.[3]

The ultimate confirmation of the divine nature of Christ

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 581. Cf. B., Eternal Hope, p. 143: "Had nothing further happened [after Good Friday] faith in Christ would have collapsed."

2. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 372.

3. Ibid., p. 366.

in the God-man lies in His Resurrection and in His living relationship with believing men as from apostolic times. It is Brunner's conviction that Christ did not and does not reveal Himself as Risen Lord to other than the faithful. This revelation is dependent upon the dialectic of God meeting man and man meeting God in the experience of faith in Jesus Christ. With reference to the "appearances" of the Risen Lord, Brunner says:

> He had to attest Himself thus to the Apostles by those appearances as the Risen Lord, in order that they should believe in Him, see Him again, and really see Him as He is. He does not make Himself known to us in the same way. He makes Himself known to us through the collective witness of the Apostles, through the story of His life (in the Gospels), and the explanation of this story which the Apostles give us, through which we see Himself, and can ourselves learn to know Him as they saw Him and knew Him.[4]

This does not mean that the Resurrected Christ is not also in direct communion with the believing Christian, and Brunner does not intend to imply this, for he says of the Christian, "He believes in the Risen Lord not because the Resurrection is told as a narrative of something that happened, but because he knows Christ as the living present Lord."[2]

What, then, is to be made of the varied and often

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 371.

2. Ibidem.

divergent lines of testimony to an actual rising from the dead that are found in the Gospels? Brunner does not equivocate: "Easter, the Resurrection of the Lord, is not an 'historical event' which can be reported. If it were, could it be Easter?"[1] Such a question can only be answered in the negative. "Easter, the Resurrection communication of the Christ, is itself revelation, the divine self-testimony, which, as such, allows of no objectivity because it is addressed wholly to faith."[2] The door of faith in a living Christ does not open on the hinges of an attested physical reanimation of the dead Jesus and a tomb emptied of the body of His flesh. Brunner avows a theological consistency in his position: "We remain true to our canon at this particular point, because only so do we gain a real understanding of belief in the Resurrection."[3] It is true here, as always, that the believer is required to walk by faith and not by sight.

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 575.

2. Ibidem. Brunner almost becomes sarcastic over the idea of an alternative view: "What use are 'eye-witnesses' for the event of Easter? What sort of an occult process do people imagine it to have been that it could be described in semi-scientific terms?" (Ibidem).

3. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 370.

In a break with traditional interpretation, Brunner argues that the Risen Christ and the Ascended Christ should be considered synonymous terms. This is to reject the Lucan account of a forty-day interval between Resurrection and Ascension and in so doing to obviate the difficulties involved in the concept of a physical "going up" to Heaven. originating from this solitary witness. Yet the idea itself has something in it to be zealously guarded. "The idea of 'Exaltation' is of central significance for us because it expresses the truth that through the Resurrection of Jesus humanity and divinity are henceforth bound together 'in Heaven'."[1] It can be said that: "The'Exaltation' is the return to the pure transcendence of His pre-historical existence."[2] Interpreting Paul in Philippians 2, Brunner sees this "return" as the completion of a parabolic movement between heaven and earth:

> The Gospel of Jesus Christ, as Paul shows in the briefest compass in the second chapter of the Epistle to the Philippians, is a movement from God to man. In this passage Paul seems to be describing with his finger the course of a parabola, which begins from above, descends, and then once more ascends to its original plane, and then says: "This is what I mean!"[3]

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 374.

2. Ibidem.

3. B., The Mediator, p. 561.

The doctrine of the Ascension emphasizes the fact that not only has Jesus Christ been Mediator between God and man, but that He is so now and will continue to be to all eternity. The exaltation to the "right hand of God" is the climactic and necessary certification of the personal divine authority of the Saviour of mankind.

> The Crucified is the One from above -- this alone gives meaning to His Cross. Otherwise it would simply be a remarkable incident. The Crucified returns to the region whence He came: through this alone does it become credible that He really did come from above.[1]

In the Incarnation-Atonement-Exaltation ambit the amazing grace of God to sinful men is comprehended. Here are the essential features of the self-movement of holy God in the Person of His eternal Son. "They all denote the parabola from the super-sensible world, whose angular point touches the world of sense in this event of Jesus Christ."[2]

When faith encounters the exalted Christ it finds Him to be the "guarantee of Saving History . . . moving towards a goal"[3] and the One who "leads humanity to this goal."[4] He is also the guarantee of the goal of the

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 562.

2. Ibid., p. 272.

3. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 374.

4. Ibid., p. 375.

cosmos, for "the universe as a whole depends upon Him for its life; He is also its Telos, its goal and its End."[1] But, according to Brunner, this concept is to be considered only of secondary importance: "It is . . . in harmony with the whole attitude of Scripture that this cosmic character of the Lordship of Christ is emphasized far less than His Lordship over human history."[2]

In bringing the writing of this section to a close it is appropriate to underscore again the Brunnerian insistance on the primary role of faith in identifying Jesus Christ as the eternal Son of God. When man the sinner is confronted by the Living Christ, his sinful consciousness is illuminated by the Spirit and to it is revealed man's broken relationship to God. This in turn precipitates a crisis in man's life in which he, in faith-encounter, experiences the reality of the Risen and Exalted Lord who calls forth trust and obedience, and consequently reveals the holy love of God. Here again is the substantial expression of the dialectical theological principle in Brunner's thought. In the encounter of faith Jesus is no longer simply Jesus of Nazareth, the great saint. "Some-

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 375.

2. Ibidem.

thing happens to us as to Peter -- 'Verily thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!' Then will He also say to us, 'blessed art thou, for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father in heaven'."[1]

ii. The Concept of the Humanity of Jesus Christ

According to Emil Brunner, the primary task of the Christian faith is that of maintaining the revelation of God Himself in the person of Jesus Christ, which necessitates taking His real humanity seriously. To do so is to follow in the footsteps of Irenaeus of whom it can be said, "Before Luther no one ever took the vere home so seriously as Irenaeus."[2] The reality of Christ's humanity does not debase his deity but rather enhances it, and in glorifying God His humanity is in a moral relation to God. Brunner believes that the human Jesus shared and exhibited the natural characteristics of mankind, including the

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1. B., Our Faith, (London: SCM Press, Ltd., 1949).

2. B., The Mediator, p. 328fn. Brunner has several reasons for choosing to emulate Irenaeus, as he states in the Appendix to the eighth chapter of The Mediator. Significantly among these reasons is the fact that "the doctrine of the Work and the Person of Christ are so closely connected in his thought that his Christology is always soteriological, and his soteriology is always Christological" (p. 249f). It is therefore natural for Brunner to turn to this great theologian for the motto of his chief Christological work: "Jesus Christ, in His infinite love, has become what we are, in order that He may make us entirely what He is" (p. 3).

actual temptation to sin. At the same time He was different from other men. He was uniquely related to God as the eternal Son in human form. Though tempted to sin, Jesus remained sinless. Hence He was the genuine Reality of man in God and God in man.

(1) The Mystery and Uniqueness of Jesus

Although he has sometimes been charged with being docetic in his Christological thought, in all fairness to Brunner it must be affirmed that he clearly and explicitly acknowledges the real humanity of Jesus. Referring to the descriptive phrases in Galatians 4:4, he says:

> The words "born of a woman" express the fact that [Jesus] shares our common humanity . . . . He was true man. "Born under the law" means: He was born as a Jewish child; He was educated as Jewish children were educated; He lived in the tradition of the Jewish people. . . . He was subject to all the natural laws of growth. . . . He shared the limitations common to humanity. . . . He eats and drinks; He is tired; He sleeps; He feels physical pain; He is exposed to ill-treatment; He suffers the agony in the Garden of Gethsemane, being "sore troubled and amazed" . . . He dies of exhaustion on the Cross.[1]

Brunner adds to these human traits His baptism and temptation, for "to accept baptism for the forgiveness of sins, and to be tempted of the devil, are events which presuppose a truly human person."[2] But now the problem comes

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 322f. Cf. B., The Mediator, pp. 361-369.

2. Ibid., p. 323.

to the surface of the Christological discussion concerning that quality which differentiates Jesus from all other men -- His uniqueness, which is not revealed to the theologian who is preoccupied with the "how" of His being rather than the "why". And here Brunner is turning his guns on the school of Rationalism, which does not accept the "mystery", the quality in Jesus which is not open to historical criticism but only to faith-encounter.

The Gospels present to us Jesus of Nazareth, a man who is not only like ourselves, but who is also unlike ourselves. As Brunner says, "He stands before us as One who, at every point in His life, is wholly one with the will of God; who really does not allow Himself to be ministered unto, but who 'ministers' and gives His life a ransom for many."[1] Here in Jesus of Nazareth there was such a personification of the Eternal Word or Logos, of the holy love of God, that even unbelievers recognized the element of mystery, though they did not understand it. The "Messianic authority" claimed by Jesus is decisive -- absolutely so.

> This is indeed the new element in His message, not in degree, but in principle, namely, that He definitely distinguished Himself from all the Prophets

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 324.

> as One who no longer merely promises the coming of the Kingdom of God, but who proclaims that the new age has actually dawned in His own Person.[1]

Brunner is actually saying that Jesus was truly human as pictured in the Gospels, by the Apostles, and in historical study. But the Apostles, in their faith-encounter with the Risen Christ, perceived and fully accepted the eternal quality in Christ which continued to be an enigma to the unbeliever who relied on mere historical data. What the Swiss theologian is attempting to do is to declare in a convincing manner that Jesus was truly human, uniquely human, and more than human at one and the same time. This is indeed a complicated undertaking, demanding the utmost in theological expertise. It is not surprising that the progress of the discussion is tortuous.

Central to the problem is the concept of history, which has been lightly touched upon in a preceding section. Into the discussion, with its inevitable involvement with history and the historical, Brunner from time to time introduces the explication of such paired and contrasting ideas as the "supra-historical Christ" and the "Jesus of History","Christ in the flesh" and"Christ after the flesh", Jesus Christ as "Person" and Jesus as "Personality".

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, 325.

It is no easy task to sort out these intertwining threads of thought. In pursuing this objective, the modification of the theologian's viewpoint between the publication of The Mediator and the writing of the second volume of his Dogmatics must be kept in mind.

In his earlier writing Brunner, initially, does not hesitate to say, "All depends upon the fact that the Word did become flesh, and this means that the Eternal has entered into the sphere of external historical fact."[1] Incarnation involves entering into the realm of that which is visibly factual, being the object of police reports, subject for photographers, journalists, etc. This "event" (the term being used "in the most matter-of-fact literal sense") is both fundamental and peculiar to Christian faith. "It is precisely this connection with a 'brute fact' which is the distinguishing mark of the Christian religion, contrasted with every other kind of religion and philosophy."[2] On the other hand, Brunner believes that it is a grave misunderstanding to hold that the object of the Christian faith is a fact of history. A distinction must be made between the "Christ in the flesh" and the "Christ

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 153.
2. Ibid., p. 154.

after the flesh", in accordance with Romans 1:3; 9:5; and II Corinthians 5:16.[1] The "Christ in the flesh" affords a common point of interest both to the historian and the believer. "The believer believes in the Christ of whom the chronicler also must have something to report."[2] But the Christ who is brought to view by all who are historically disposed (historical-minded) is the "Christ after the flesh." Only the believer perceives that there is more in the "Christ in the flesh" than the "Christ after the flesh."[3] This distinction is only another way of saying that while the Incarnation is really and truly historical it, at the same time, transcends all historical barriers.

> Historical actuality is the way in which the Eternal Divine Word, as the Eternal Son, touches the historical world. This actuality means a real entrance into the historical mode of existence, but so far as its significance is concerned this entrance merely touches the fringe of existence.[4]

Thus, the acknowledgment of the brute facts of history is "a necessary presupposition, but . . . never an adequate ground for the knowledge of Christ."[5]

According to Brunner, the crucial point in the relationship of faith in Christ to critical science is

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1. B., The Mediator, pp. 156ff.
2. Ibid., p. 157.
3. Ibidem.
4. Ibidem.
5. Ibid., p. 158.

located in the "results" of this science.

> Faith can be combined with all kinds of historical criticism which do not alter the historical image of the existence of Jesus to such an extent that -- so far as faith is concerned -- it would be impossible to understand the apostolic testimony to Christ. . . . However, faith is wholly undisturbed, even when scientific research and criticism lead to entirely negative "results".[1]

As a matter of fact, a certain tension can be detected in the theologian's thought along this line. At times he seems to adopt a cavalier attitude toward history in its relation to Christian faith, as when he declares: "If faith were dependent on history, in the scientific sense of the word, it would then be as remote from Christianity, in the Christian sense of the word, as it would be if it were severed from the facts of history altogether."[2] And again: "Faith in Jesus Christ is not dependent on the courtesy of history."[3] On the other hand, he is willing to appeal to

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 168.

2. Ibid., p. 156. Brunner continues with grim earnestness: "For dependence on History as a science leads to a state of hopeless uncertainty. Therefore, when a thoughtful person refuses to build his relation to the eternal on anything so unsafe as historical science, he is acting rightly; for such a building is indeed a glaring example of building one's house upon the sand."

3. Ibid., p. 395. Cf. Ibid., p. 309: "History in the human sense is a matter of indifference for faith."

the findings of historical and critical scholarship -- though in a reserved sort of way -- to support his denial of the historicity of the Virgin Birth. After warning against "proof-texting" the doctrine, he goes on to say: "This . . . implies a second point, which is only of slight importance: . . . There is practically no historical evidence at all for the argument that this doctrine is based upon a statement of the parents of Jesus."[1] But again, Brunner's concern is all for the independence of faith in regard to typical "Life of Christ" literature. In his opinion, the many and varied studies of the "figure of Jesus" are simply so many examinations of, and reports on, the "personality" of the Man from Nazareth. Brunner even goes so far as to say that:

> All these representations of Jesus are as far removed from the Jesus Christ of faith as the mystery of God is removed from the general conception of God, as "general" revelation (which is really no revelation at all) is removed from "special" revelation, as the Word of God is distinct from moral

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 324. The clause "which is only of slight importance" indicates that Brunner is aware of the danger of weakening his previous argument against the value of the historical in matters pertaining to faith. His dilemma is this: If he underrates history, docetism creeps into his Christological construction; if he overrates history, the "purity" of the sola fide principle becomes adulterated.

and religious humanity.[1]

Therefore, "Jesus" must be thought of as belonging to the general, to the empirical, certainly not to faith.

In the years after the publication of The Mediator, and especially after the appearance of Wahrheit als Begegnung (1938), Brunner began to place a fuller emphasis on the unity of the "Jesus of History" with the "Christ of Faith." This is to be seen most markedly in the second volume of his Dogmatics, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption. In this work he devotes the entire tenth chapter, "The Foundation of the Christian Faith", to the problem. As in the earlier writings, he maintains that the historian in his academic quest cannot come to a knowledge of Christ. However, a change of emphasis becomes apparent. Brunner adopts a "softer line" toward historical criticism. He now holds that "after the process of critical examination has been achieved, it can be said: this historical Jesus is the same as the One whom the Apostles call the Christ, the Kyrios, the Son of God,

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 76f. The parenthetical designation of "general" revelation as "really no revelation at all" is the most negative assertion that Brunner makes on this subject. The dominance of the Barthian "absolute discontinuity" concept is very apparent here. History, of course, is regarded by Brunner as a part of "general" revelation.

the Incarnate Word of God."[1] Although no simple unity is to be found in the New Testament with regard to Jesus Christ, nevertheless, the objective situation is such that on the one hand there is a picture of the life of Jesus, and on the other hand there are a number of doctrines about Jesus the Christ. But it would be a mistake to cling exclusively to either of these two elements, since: "It is in the providence of God that both have been given to us."[2] Furthermore, "It is a mistake to contrast 'Jesus Himself' with the witness of the Apostles; for the doctrine of the Apostles does not aim at saying anything other than who 'Jesus Himself' is, and what 'Jesus Himself' means for us."[3] The burden of proof is not on believers to prove this congruence, but rather on unbelievers to prove that Jesus is not the Christ.

Brunner returns to the same point in the later chapter on "The Person of Jesus Christ." Here he states that:

> In His historical reality Jesus proves that He is the Christ, but it is only faith that perceives

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 245.

2. Ibid., p. 251.

3. Ibid., p. 251f.

> this full historical reality. To see the true Jesus of History and to believe in Him as the Christ, is the same thing. Faith in Jesus the Christ is identical with the true perception of the historical reality of Jesus.[1]

In a similar vein he writes on another page: "The historical evidence supports the believer, not the unbeliever; although the verdict: 'Jesus is the Son of God' is a verdict of faith, and not of mere historical insight."[2] These citations will suffice to show the swing of the pendulum in one area of Brunner's Christological thought. How profound a change from his older viewpoint they actually represent will be considered and estimated in the next chapter.

Closely parallelling the foregoing discussion is the treatment of the concept of the "incognito." It is Brunner's earlier contention that insofar as Jesus' life was historical, it was not the revelation of God:

> It is true that Jesus of Nazareth is a historical phenomenon, and his life a historical event. But as far as this goes it is no revelation of God. This appearance in history is the "incognito" of divine revelation, which can only be brought to light by faith.[3]

Where Jesus discloses Himself to faith in faith, "history

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 327.

2. Ibid., p. 326.

3. B., The Philosophy of Religion, p. 147f. Cf. B., The Mediator, p. 271.

disappears and the Kingdom of God has begun."[1] He then ceases to be an historical personality and is God's eternal Son. Christ, as it were, wears the mask of history. "This is His incognito."[2] The effectiveness of the disguise can be readily appreciated, for nothing is more usual than human personality. "It is complete, because to us there is nothing more ordinary, less striking, more familiar than a human person like ourselves."[3] In this way God comes indirectly to offer Himself for decision. This incognito was necessary in order to make room for the decision of faith. Christ's appearance in the splendour of His divine glory would have slammed the door against faith and cudgelled man into believing. Any possibility of free decision would have been denied. According to Brunner, only the completely indirect communication makes possible the completely free decision of faith.[4]

It becomes apparent in The Mediator that the cardinal revelational category for the whole life of Christ is the incognito which signifies, in Brunner's dialectical treatment, revelation in absolute concealment. The true humanity of Christ implies His concealment in the flesh

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 346. 2. Ibidem.
3. Ibid., p. 334. Cf. Ibid., p. 337.
4. Ibid., pp. 334-340.

without glory and without direct knowability. The impression is given that the humanity, the "revelation" in the flesh, actually has nothing whatsoever to do with revelation, since its whole function would seem to be to hide rather than disclose.

But again, the later writing of the Swiss theologian shows a somewhat modified viewpoint. In Dogmatics II the term "incognito" is dropped from the discussion of the Person of Christ and Monophysitism is briefly commended for the way in which it stresses "the truth that Jesus, in the wholeness of His Person, is revelation."[1] Brunner now says of Christ's humanity, "The very thing which seems to conceal His Godhead, His flesh, the weakness of earthly creatureliness, is an essential element in the divine glory of revelation."[2] This is particularly true of Christ on the Cross. "It is precisely the exinanitio . . . which is the supreme height of the self-manifestation of God."[3] However, this is a truth that is deepest mystery and that can only be accepted by faith.

In The Mediator Brunner attempts to deal with the mystery and uniqueness of the God-man by means of a Person/personality differentiation. In so doing he proceeds by

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 361.

2. Ibidem.

3. Ibidem.

analogy to make a distinction between the "biographical" picture of a human life as it appears to the historian and the "personal mystery of responsible being."[1] Hidden in this mystery is the fact of sin, which is only unmasked before Christ and is thus the object not of historical insight but of faith alone. "As persons we cannot be known, only believed."[2] The same kind of statement (though on different grounds) must be made about the God-man. In His true being, His supra-historical Person, He cannot be discerned except by faith. All that is cognizable of Him in His earthly existence to other than faith is His "personality" which is His humanity. It is by way of the same experience that the insight of faith into human personality and into the personality of the God-man is made real. Seeing Him by faith as the Word made flesh, we see ourselves, as sinners, with the penetrating vision of faith alone.

The uniqueness of the revelation in Christ is a strand of thought that is well-woven into Brunner's Christological writing and should receive here additional consideration. The significance conveyed by this idea is

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1. B., The Mediator, pp. 318-320; 345-354. This method of treatment belongs exclusively to this work.

2. Ibid., p. 319.

plainly stated: "It is this unique event which, to be unique, can only happen once, and therefore is an incomparable fact: this is the revelation."[1] In The Mediator the interpretation of the "once-ness" that belongs to Jesus Christ is put in the following words:

> The Word of God comes to us from the further side, from beyond the border-line which separates God and man; it is God's own Word about Himself, His secret, based on the fact that He alone is God; it is something in which the world, man, and human reason have no part, that which is reserved to God Himself, that which separates Him, the Creator, from His creature. The Word of God, revelation, means the issuing forth of this hidden One from His concealment through God's incomprehensible self-communication. Thus it can only come absolutely from God Himself, and, indeed, in a sense that differs entirely from all that is created, natural and historical . . . It means . . . the entrance into history of that which, by its very nature, cannot enter into history, because it is eternal.[2]

Here is the typical Barthian accent on the strict discontinuity between God and man, between the Creator and all that is a part of His creation. However, when Brunner comes to the writing of the third volume of his Dogmatics, The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation, he is careful to point out the double significance of the uniqueness which must be predicated to the Lord of Christian faith:

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 333.
2. Ibid., p. 238.

> The category of uniqueness, in contrast to the perpetual recurrence of natural events, constitutes the nature of the historical as such. For this reason Christian faith is the faith which possesses an unconditional historical character through its two-fold relationship to the unique -- namely to the historically and relatively unique, and to the absolutely unique as faith understands it . . . to what has happened in Christ.[1]

While "The uniqueness which in the New Testament is expressly predicated of Christ goes far beyond the general historical sense of the word,"[2] Brunner is willing to concede that "His uniqueness in this . . . sense is an essential part of the fundamental confession of the Christian faith."[3] That Jesus Christ "suffered under Pontius Pilate" is an important historical fact, but faith has a perspicacity unknown to the historian in that faith understands the Crucifixion as the decisive and unrepeatable event of the Atonement. "Here . . . alone we find this circumstance, that an event which is unique in the relative sense known to world history is apprehended by faith as an event which is absolutely or unconditionally unique."[4] Brunner's steadfast insistence on the once-for-all nature of the Person and work of Christ is a useful

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith, and the Consummation, p. 369.

2. Ibid., p. 368.

3. Ibidem.

4. Ibid., p. 369.

safeguard against Docetism in his Christological thought. For, as he points out, all alleged theophanies and incarnations outside of the Christian religion lack reality, in that what is "said to have happened several times really means that nothing happened at all."[1]

The uniqueness of Jesus, the man, is the mystery that remains mystery and is only grasped in faith, "the act of 'grasping reality,' . . . the open eye for the true historical actuality of Jesus."[2] And this "actuality" means His supra-historical existence in historical reality. References to "supra-historical existence" and the "mystery of His Person" are not intended by Brunner to undermine the concept of the real humanity of Jesus, though this danger lurks in the background. Especially in his later work is it evident that he considers the whole kerygmatic core to be necessary to a right understanding of Jesus of Nazareth. Here Jesus cannot be the object of study for empiricism alone or determined to be the Son of God by "mere historical insight,"[3] for He is

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 26.

2. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 327.

3. Ibid., p. 326.

both part of the historical continuum and at the same time He is of the quality beyond history which is revealed only to faith in personal encounter. Such faith declares without hesitancy: "To see the true Jesus of History and to believe in Him as the Christ, is the same thing."[1] With His work serving as the key, faith grasps the saving significance of this strange figure, Jesus of Nazareth. The residual mystery of His Being -- the "Love [Agape] of God, which is the principle and the force which constitutes and determines His human life, and which He gives to us with His divine power"[2] -- is "the heart of the revelation of God which takes place in the Person of Jesus."[3] This is the central message of the Gospel, the message of the down-coming, self-giving Love of God in an absolutely unique Person. But this is the crucial question: "Whether we simply hear this message, or whether it finds the heart, whether we apprehend it as the truth, whether we hear God Himself come to us in Jesus calling us to Himself."[4] If and when the latter takes place,

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 327.

2. Ibid., p. 257.

3. Ibidem.

4. B., Our Faith, p. 60.

Jesus the Galilean is at once real humanity and real divinity, the very Mystery and Reality itself.

With respect to the "Natures" concept of the Creed of Chalcedon, Brunner both gives assent to the truth inherent in the Two-nature Doctrine and at the same time is strongly critical of the metaphysical theorizing and misunderstanding that have followed in the wake of this formulation. "The doctrine of the Two Natures itself is right, but it is the metaphysical misunderstanding that causes difficulty."[1] Specifically, the Lutheran teaching of the communicatio idiomatum which involves the blending of the two natures in the historic individual, Jesus Christ, represents a type of theory fraught with hazard.

> It is dangerous, not merely because a conflict with historical science thus actually became inevitable, but, above all, because it seemed as though the divine-humanity would have to be posited as an independent entity. Thus the God-man as the God-man could be perceived by all. . . . The deity was materialized, the decision of faith was ruled out . . . . Revelation became a theophany, the Incarnation an actual transformation of the Divine Logos -- in so far as the humanity was taken

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 343. In an earlier discussion of this subject Brunner lets it be known in no uncertain terms that he is wholly in accord with the "heart-truth" of Chalcedon and is in no sympathy whatsoever with those modern critics of a historical positivist or phenomenalist persuasion who use an avowed antipathy to the form of the Two-nature doctrine to screen a fundamental opposition to New Testament revelation itself. (Cf. Ibid., pp. 335-337)

> seriously at all, as, for instance, in the Kenotic theory.[1]

All of these consequences, so deplorable from the evangelical point of view, are regarded as ensuing from "the desire to explain the Divine Humanity of Christ, to make it metaphysically clear."[2] Such a desire, according to Brunner, is thoroughly wrong. Therefore he is prepared to say that "the whole complex of problems raised by the doctrine of the Two Natures is the result of a question which is wrongly posed."[3] This question is concerned with wanting to know what is simply unknowable, that is, "how divinity and humanity are united in the Person of Jesus Christ."[4] The conclusion of the matter, in Brunner's opinion, is that the theologian should put far from him the temptation to think abstractly of the schema of "Natures" and that the side-by-side affirmations of Chalcedon should be allowed to stand inviolate and uninvestigated as a kind of creedal monument to an insoluble mystery, namely, that Jesus in His Person is at one and the same time vere Deus and vere homo.

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 343.

2. Ibidem. This is exactly the same kind of "wrong desire" that Brunner thinks he detects behind the development of the Virgin Birth doctrine.

3. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 362. Cf. B., The Mediator, 322fn.

4. Ibidem.

(2) The Relation of Jesus Christ to Man

To understand the relationship of Jesus Christ to man in the thought of Emil Brunner, it is necessary to acknowledge his affirmation that Jesus the Christ is both vere Deus and vere homo, true God and true man. Brunner makes both of these statements with firmness and without reduction. Furthermore the concept of the indwelling Christ must be included in the discussion of the relationship.

The deity of Christ is the content of revelation in that God and Christ are of the same substance and co-eternal. His humanity is the actualization of revelation, the fact that

> . . . at this one point in the world and in history it is true that the borderline between the Creator and the creature has been crossed, that from the standpoint of natural knowledge, there is a human creature who is God, and that it has pleased God to identify Himself with a definite, localized finite given entity, with the historical Person, Jesus of Nazareth.[1]

Therefore, Christ was related to man in that He was not only in the form of man, but man Himself, like all men, but without sin. Therefore, He is related to man in that He was not only in the form of man, but man Himself, like

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 362.

all men, but without sin. Brunner deals with the problem presented by the sinlessness of Jesus Christ in connection with the Person/personality analysis discussed in the previous section.

> Christ has indeed assumed human nature, but not a human person. Thus He may have assumed the possibility of being tempted -- the possibility of sin which is connected with the historical personality -- but He did not assume the corrupted personality spoilt by Original Sin, that is the necessity of falling in temptation. To fall in temptation -- in spite of Original Sin -- is never a natural fact, but always and only a personal act. Hence it is said of Christ: He was tempted in all points like as we are -- yet without sin.[1]

Into the breach between God and man, into the abyss of "sinful flesh" stepped the Mediator. "He came in order to enter into the abyss and thus to build the bridge, but not in order to make the gulf wider . . . by committing sin Himself."[2] Brunner concludes his argument by saying,

> Hence, although He assumed human nature with its possibilities of being tempted, even an historical personality after the manner of men, He did not assume human personality in the sense of the ultimate mystery. Instead of the human mystery of personality, sin, he possesses the divine mystery of personality: divine authority.[3]

Therefore, Jesus Christ is related to men as the holy Love of God who reveals God, judges as God, and redeems and reconciles as God. If He were only divine, He would

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 319.

2. Ibid., p. 320.

3. Ibidem.

become an impersonal Idea apart from man and God who is person. If He were only human, then, corrupted by sin, He could not be free to reveal God who is not subject to sin. His relationship to man is that of the God-man, in but not of the world, One with the Creator and One with man under the conditions of creaturehood, but not limited by the power of sin.

In faith, Jesus Christ, the Redeemer and Reconciler, is perceived as the eternal Son, the Personal Word, the Divine Christ. Otherwise, He is understood as Jesus, the great religious teacher, an Example (advantaged over others by being primus inter pares), the greatest of the Prophets, or He is assigned to some other niche of human pre-eminence. As the divine Christ, the God-man is the fulfilment of all of these, which are but qualities of His divine yet human nature. But here the matter cannot rest for the Christian. His knowledge in faith can scarcely be better expressed than in the "simple confession . . . which alone is explicitly contained in the New Testament: Jesus Christ the Lord, Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Redeemer."[1] Furthermore, "Fellowship with the living Lord who is present with us: this is what

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1. B., Truth as Encounter, p. 153.

faith in Christ in the New Testament preeminently means."[1] And, with added emphasis on this Biblical doctrine, Brunner affirms: "Jesus Christ, God Himself in persona is the real gift. The Word of God in its ultimate meaning is thus precisely not 'a word from God', but God in person, God Himself speaking, Himself present, Immanuel."[2] And this redemptive self-giving of God in Christ relates, in Brunner's thought, exclusively to man rather than creation as a whole.

> The purpose of the Incarnation refers rather to sinful fallen humanity and the creature than to the creature as such. The coming of the Son into the world is not a coming into God's Creation, but into sinful creation. . . . It is connected with closing the gulf which yawns not between the creature and the Creator, but between man who is sinful and a wrathful God.[3]

Interpreting Romans 8:19-23 in his commentary The Letter to the Romans, Brunner says: "One cannot fail to recognize that this concept 'creation' mostly denotes humanity for Paul, and that he nowhere else speaks of the world of nature."[4] While God is related to nature in a formal sense in general revelation, the special revelation in

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1. B., Truth as Encounter, p. 153.

2. Ibid., p. 132.

3. B., The Mediator, p. 314.

4. B., The Letter to the Romans - A Commentary, p. 75. (London: Lutterworth Press, 2nd Imp., 1961).

Christ the Redeemer is directed entirely to man and his need.

Brunner believes that Jesus Christ, in disregarding all other possible concerns and in only seeing human beings and human needs, strikingly manifested "His existential attitude."[1] In harmony with this attitude, the reconciling mission to sinful men engaged the exclusive attention and was the sole interest of Him who was in solidarity with the whole human race and also in "solidarity with that which separates humanity from God . . . with the divine wrath which works death."[2]

As for man vis à vis Immanuel, Brunner holds that faith itself is consequent to the indwelling Christ who comes to man in the faith-encounter. The formal imago dei in man gives him the receptive capacity, while the material imago dei of the faith-decision yields the content. The basis of the relationship and the relationship itself is indeed dialectical involving faith and encounter, with the primary move being made by God Incarnate and the secondary move or response being made by man. Understood in this perspective, the indwelling Christ, the Incarnate Lord, deals with His own in their religious and ethical experiences. Actually, other than in terms of His function

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 496. 2. Ibidem.

or work, Brunner does not distinguish between the Eternal Son and the indwelling Christ -- in fact, they are considered to be one in his thought. Through the human Jesus they are both manifested to faith.

In his treatment of the revelation in Jesus Christ, Brunner undoubtedly intends to acknowledge the manifestation of both the immanence and transcendence of God.[1] He holds that these two aspects of the divine being are included in the Person and Work of the Mediator -- the Person being discerned from His Work. "The transcendent character of this proceeding must be stated unmistakably. . . . This emphasis on the other-worldly character of this

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1. Cf. B., The Word and the World, pp. 7-8. In the preface to this slender volume of lectures Brunner reacts toward certain critics who have directed their barbs at what they observed to be a weakness in the Barthian theological armour. His words are worth quoting: "Much nonsense has been talked about the 'Barthian Theology' having perception only for the transcendence of God, not for His immanence. As if we too were not aware that God the Creator upholds all things by His power, that He has set the stamp of His divinity on the world and created man to be His own image! It is just because these things are so, and only for that reason, that real contradiction is possible. Only the man created as the image of God can be a sinner, a contradictor; only the man to whom God as Creator is ever near can be farther off from God than any star on earth; only the man in whose reason there is a divinely caused unrest can so err in his reason as to be no longer capable of recognizing God in His own creation, but only where God manifests Himself to him in the lowliness of the Son of Man. All that our critics have written about 'transcendence' and 'immanence' really does not touch us" (p. 7f).

act does not do away with the Divine Immanence in the world . . . it presupposes it."[1] In developing His doctrine of the Person of Christ from this position, he utilizes the categories and concepts of "faith-encounter", "mystery" and "paradox." On the one hand he believes that they provide for an understanding of the one Person which both retains His true humanity -- His one-ness with all other men; and His true deity -- His one-ness with God. On the other hand they furnish a Christological view which acknowledges in the divine-human person the disclosure of God who is both immanent and transcendent.

In the succeeding chapter Emil Brunner's interpretation of the Person of Jesus Christ will be critically evaluated along with that of P. T. Forsyth.

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 390. On this point cf. Brunner's last dogmatic writing, The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, in which, commenton the one and only time in the Gospel of John where Jesus addressed God as "Holy Father" (John 17:11), he says: "Obviously what is meant by this is that here, at the conclusion of Jesus' revealing work, the holiness of God -- that aspect of the divine Nature which describes God's distance from the world, His total otherness, His transcendence of the world -- no longer implies a dividing barrier, but that His holiness has been revealed as one with His self-revealing love" (p. 327).

3. The Work of Jesus Christ

Under this heading the divine activity of reconciliation which, since the enunciation of the Wahrheit-als-Begegnung principle, Brunner has firmly held to be the key to the Person of Christ, will be discussed. The first sub-division of this section will deal with certain determinative features of the reconciling work. The second sub-division will concern itself more particularly with Brunner's assessment of traditional Atonement theories and his own doctrine of Atonement.

i. The Divine Drama of Reconciliation

One might well describe the work of Jesus Christ in the thought of Emil Brunner as "The Divine Drama of Reconciliation." The participants would include the God of holy Love, sinful man and the Mediator, Jesus Christ. A comprehension of the role of the Mediator requires a prior knowledge of Brunner's concept of the character of the other members of the "cast." The significant factors involved in such an understanding are the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. These factors will be considered in proper order as they relate to the dramatis personae: holy God and man the sinner. In theological terms, this means the examination of certain aspects of

Brunner's doctrine of God and doctrine of man. The scope of our study must widen at this point to include a bit of his Christian "theology" and of his Christian anthropology. It is only through this approach that the more "purely" Christological consideration of the Mediator in His reconciling role can be seriously attempted. And finally, account must be taken of the fact that the whole "drama" is enacted against the background of the Cross. It is therefore fitting that Brunner's specific views on the Atonement should be set forth under the sub-title: "Interpreting the Cross." It is on the eminence of Calvary and in the illumination of the Cross that Christological vision is the clearest -- that God is seen in His holiness, that man is seen in his sinfulness, and therefore the Crucified is seen as the all-sufficient Mediator, the personal manifestation of all that is comprehended in the love (Agape) of holy God for man the sinner.

(1) God and His Holiness

Chapter 14 of Brunner's first volume in the series on Dogmatics, The Christian Doctrine of God, is an interesting dissertation on "holy" as an attribute of the divine Being. It begins thus:

> From the standpoint of revelation the first

> thing which has to be said about God is His Sovereignty, but this first point is intimately related with a second one -- so closely indeed that we might even ask whether it ought not to have come first: God is the Holy One. 'Hallowed be thy Name' -- it is very significant that in the prayer of the Christian Church this clause comes first. The one concern of the Christian Faith is the Holy Name, and the 'hallowing' of this Name. Although in the New Testament the idea of the Holiness of God as a divine attribute is emphasized somwhat less than in the Old Testament, yet it is everywhere presupposed, and it appears at decisive points, where the whole revealing and saving work of Christ is gathered up as the revelation of the Name: 'Holy Father, keep them in thy Name which Thou hast given me.'[1]

Book Three of The Mediator[2] abounds in the use of the terms "holy" and "holiness." There is also an extensive and interchangeable usage of the closely related -- or identical, as Brunner thinks of them -- words of "glory", "majesty" and "sovereignty." He says, "The sovereignty of God means the Holiness of God, the fact that God is God."[3] He does not hesitate to give solid and prior emphasis to the Holiness of God and to all that is indigenous to the expression. There is ample Scriptural authorization for such a procedure. "The Bible is the book in which the glory of God is the first concern and the salvation of

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 157. In a footnote Brunner observes that the modification of the emphasis on holiness in the New Testament "is more apparent than real when we reflect that the New Testament lays so much more emphasis on the Holy Spirit."

2. This part of Brunner's magnum opus bears the title: "The Work of the Mediator."

3. B., The Mediator, p. 470.

man comes second."[1]

On the one hand the Scriptures reveal the absolute, unconditional and exclusive aspect of God's holiness:

> God the sovereign Lord, the One whose will is identical with Himself, and who can therefore be known as identical with His will, who is the enemy of all caprice, whose will can be relied on absolutely; this Lord, Yaweh, the "I AM THAT I AM" -- this is the Holy God of the Bible. . . . this divine self-affirmation is that which the Bible calls the Holiness of God. . . . It is on account of His Holiness that God says: "My glory will I not give to another." For, to "give His glory to another" would mean cleaving His will in two. It is of the very nature of the holy God that He should be supreme, that His sovereignty should be absolute and unquestioned.[2]

Thus, according to Brunner, the divine Holiness is inseparable from "that character of absolute intolerance that distinguishes the Biblical idea of God."[3] This is the negative aspect; this is the "exclusiveness" of the holy will.

But there is a positive aspect. "God <u>wills</u> to be recognized as God."[4] He is not indifferent to man's disposition towards Him. He is not a static Being with

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1. B., <u>The Mediator</u>, p. 408.

2. Ibid., pp. 460-461.

3. B., <u>The Christian Doctrine of God</u>, p. 160. Cf. B., <u>The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation</u>, p. 290; "God's holiness is His will to be acknowledged as God alone."

4. Ibidem.

static attributes; He is the God of revelation. It is a matter of paramount concern to Him that He should be acknowledged by man as "the Holy One, the One who is wholly Other."[1] This is the opposite movement of the divine Will as it is comprehended in the Holiness of God. This is the movement to expand and include.

This line of reasoning leads Brunner into a discussion -- not without close relatedness -- of the subject of the "Wrath" of God. His thought may be followed in a particularly illuminative quotation:

> Both the negative and the positive aspects of the divine energy of will are inseparable from the divine being of God. What kind of God would He be if He did not care whether people took Him seriously or not? Since God takes Himself absolutely seriously, He gives seriousness to life. . . . This "seriousness" works itself out negatively as resistance provoked by resistance, and indeed as resistance which ultimately is the rock against which all other resistance founders. . . . This is the Divine Wrath, the working out of the Divine Glory upon those who refuse to give Him glory; the working out of the Holiness of God against him who irreverently, godlessly, does not acknowledge Him. . . . The idea of the Divine Wrath cannot be severed from that of the Holiness of God.[2]

However, it is also true -- and more significantly so -- that the Love of God is bound up with His Holiness. "The living God is the God whose love is united with holi-

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 161.

2. Ibid., p. 161f.

ness."[1] This unity is plainly taught in the Book of Hosea and in scattered passages in the prophecy of Isaiah. It also becomes the logical terminus of Brunner's progressive thinking up to this point:

> This is the ultimate dialectic . . . .the dialectic of Holiness and Love. As the Holy One, God wills to be separate from all creatures; as the Holy One He also wills that all creation should be filled with His glory, and thus should have a share in that quality which is His alone. Thus the holiness of God is the basis of the self-communication which is fulfilled in love.[2]

While the wrath of God is very real, it is never, like love, of His essence. "Scripture says that God is love, but never that God is wrath."[3] The Holiness of God therefore includes the inseverable idea of Wrath and the essential idea of Love, and this concept in all of its meaningfulness must be understood over against the concept of man in his sin.

(2) Man and his Sinfulness

According to Brunner, "Wrath" is "that which God is, so to speak, forced to do by man for the sake of His Holi-

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1. B., The Scandal of Christianity, p. 78.
2. B., The Christian Doctrine of God, pp. 163-164.
3. B., The Scandal of Christianity, p. 80. Cf. The Mediator, p. 519: "The wrath of God is not the ultimate reality; . . . In Himself God is love."

ness."[1] The question then arises: What is it that "forces" holy God to comport Himself in wrath and anger toward men? All orthodox theologians would immediately answer that it is man's sin. Brunner makes the conventional reply, but he does so in terms of the starkest realism and in a spirit of the greatest earnestness and gravity. This involves the employment of a vast number of vivid descriptives and designations, of which a representative sampling might include the following: Sin is an "unfathomable abyss" that is entirely unbridgeable from man's side;[2] it is a "wall of partition blocking our access to God" which God alone can demolish;[3] it is the awfulness of "life without God";[4] it is a "fatal disharmony" with God;[5] it is the "personal act of apostasy, of disobedience, of aliena-

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 483.

2. Ibid., p. 446. "Abyss" and "gulf" are used by Brunner more frequently than any other terms to describe sin and its consequences.

3. B., The Great Invitation, p. 58. This is a collection of strongly evangelical sermons preached by Emil Brunner over a period of several years to his congregation in Zürich and published shortly before his departure on his two-year teaching mission in the International Christian University of Tokyo. The original title of the book was Fraumünster-Predigten, Zwingli-Verlag, Zürich, 1953.

4. Ibid., p. 121. Brunner adds, " . . . -- that is what Paul means by sin."

5. B., The Mediator, p. 484.

tion from God;"[1] it is that which characterizes "man in revolt" against God;[2] and, most importantly perhaps, sin "in the last resort . . . is the denial of God and self-deification; it is getting rid of the Lord God, and the proclamation of self-sovereignty."[3] For Brunner, "Both 'sin' and 'guilt' express the truly personal relation between God and man."[4] Furthermore, they are both universal. "Sin is not only something which affects us all in the same way, but it is something which concerns us all as a whole."[5] Or, to state it in a more Scriptural way: "We stand before God as one 'Adam', as a humanity which is totally infected with an indissoluble identical burden of

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 109. In this volume of his Dogmatics Brunner devotes a chapter (number 3) to the discussion of "Man as Sinner."

2. Ibid., p. 124. Man In Revolt is the title of one of Brunner's major works, q. v. passim, but note especially Chapter VI: "The Destruction of the Image of God."

3. Ibid., p. 93.

4. B., The Mediator, p. 444. Here, as in his thinking on the Person of Christ, Brunner gives the due attention to the dimension of the personal which is required by his underlying principle of "truth as encounter."

5. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 96. Brunner goes on to say: "Here we stand before a mystery . . . a mystery, however, which is a mystery of faith for everyone who stands before Jesus Christ as his Lord and Saviour" (p. 97f).

guilt."[1]

Though he uses the strongest terms in setting forth the heinousness of sin, Brunner maintains that: "The expression ' the total depravity of man,' which in later Calvinism has become a slogan, is not biblical."[2] However, "the truth of this concept is that it is the totality of man, not a part of him, which is responsible for sin."[3] Brunner has his own choice of terms to express this same truth: "The broken relation with God means the perversion and poisoning of all the functions of life."[4] The idea of "perversion" is much to be preferred over that of "corruption" since it "corresponds far more closely to the contradictory character of sin . . . than the idea of corruptio which has more of a contrary and therefore natural character."[5] Statements of this sort skirt the edge of the vexed problem of the imago Dei which occupies

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 104. Cf. B., Man in Revolt, pp. 139-142.

2. B., The Scandal of Christianity, p. 65.

3. Ibidem.

4. B., Man In Revolt, p. 136f. cf. B., The Mediator, p. 443. Brunner here declares guilt to be "something absolutely infinite" and sin is "the perversion of human nature through the perversion of the human attitude toward God."

5. Ibid., p. 137fn.

so much of Brunner's thought. In his historic and heated controversy with Karl Barth he professes to regard the treatment of the problem in the work of John Calvin -- in spite of some differences of expression -- as being congenial to his own view. Although the imago Dei is basic to Calvinistic anthropology, the concept "points across to Christology, since Christ is the original of that likeness, the human imago."[1] And, on the narrower base of soteriology, the relationship is even closer, "since the full content of the imago Dei can only be known from the reparatio, from the regeneratio through Christ and the Holy Spirit."[2]

It is Brunner's conviction that, in the spirit of Calvin if not in his language, he can make a meaningful anthropological distinction between what he calls the "formal" and the "material" images in man which will serve a dual Christological purpose. Such a procedure, in his opinion, will have the double merit of retaining in man a "point of contact" for the down-coming grace of God in Jesus Christ, and, at the same time, of insuring loyal

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1. Natural Theology, Comprising "Nature and Grace" by Professor Dr. Emil Brunner and the reply "No!" by Dr. Karl Barth. Translated by Peter Fraenkel, Geoffrey Bles: The Centenary Press, London, 1946, p. 40.

2. Ibidem.

adherence to the Biblical and Reformed principle of sola gratia. In other words, his object is to give a relevance to general revelation in the relationship of God to man which will in no sense infringe upon the absolute necessity of the special redemptive revelation of God in Christ. The "sum and substance" of the attempted distinction and its significance, as set forth in Natural Theology, is as follows:

> We have to consider the image of God in man in two ways; one formal and one material. The formal sense . . . is the human, i.e. that which distinguishes man from all the rest of creation, whether he be a sinner or not. . . . We can define this by two concepts: the fact that man is a subject and his responsibility. . . . Man . . . is a subject, a rational creature. . . . Not even as a sinner does he cease to be one with whom . . . God can speak. And this is the very nature of man: to be responsible. Upon these two characteristics, that of his capacity for words and that of responsibility, which in their turn are closely interrelated, depends not only man's special position but also the connection between this special position and the form of the redeeming revelation, namely that God becomes man.
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> If the formal side of the imago Dei is thus conceived, it does not in any way result in an encroachment upon the material concept of justitia originalis, nor in a lessening of the weight of the statement that this justitia originalis is completely lost. . . . We distinguish categorically; formally the imago is not in the least touched -- whether sinful or not, man is a subject and is responsible. Materially, the imago is completely lost, man is a sinner through and through and there is nothing in him which is not defiled by sin.[1]

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1. Natural Theology, pp. 23-24. Brunner believes that what he calls the "formal" side of the imago is virtually

Such is the kernel of Brunner's anthropological view with its Christological implications -- a view in which he seems to be saying that man is both utterly shut away from God by his sin and, at the same time, somehow "open" to the divine bestowal of grace in Jesus Christ.

In all considerations of the range and depth of man's sinful plight one must not lose sight of the way in which sin and guilt have an inescapable bearing upon God's Holiness. "The idea of guilt expresses not only the solidarity of humanity, the totality of life, but also, and above all, the inviolable Holiness of God."[1] In Brunner's estimate of the enormity of sin he lays great stress upon the fact that sin is against divine Holiness, against that which "makes God God" -- not just against the honour that attaches to His sovereign office, as in Anselm, not merely

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the same as what Calvin calls the "remnant" of the imago. However, in his sharp rebuttal of Brunner's argument, Karl Barth shows rather decisively that in Calvin's teaching the possibility of natural man's deriving any genuine knowledge of God from the created order (which includes any inherently "human" attributes) is entirely hypothetical, being so determined by the absolutely significant conditional clause that the Reformer brings into his discussion, namely: "si integer stetisset Adam." According to Barth, the adamantly hard fact of the matter, both for Calvin and himself, is that Adam did fall and that natural man ever since has remained totally devoid of any innate ability to lay hold upon the truth of God. (cf. Ibid., pp. 106, 109)

1. B., The Mediator, p. 463.

against the law, as in Calvin. So, when he uses the language of Anselm in saying that "Sin . . . is an attack on God's honour,"[1] an explanation is in order; "His honour is His Godhead. . . . God would cease to be God if He could permit His honour to be attacked. . . . The Holiness of God requires the annihilation of the will which resists God."[2]

Brunner declares that any appraisal of man's predicament, or proposal for the relief thereof, that glosses over the real nature of sin and guilt, and the objective reality of the consequent "gulf", can only beget a deeper guilt. A true facing up to the grim facts leads to the conclusion that whatever is done to remedy the situation must be done by holy God. Yet the gravity of man's sinfulness cannot be detected by human reason. Such knowledge only becomes apparent to faith.

> The true perception of sin is a gift of revelation, a religious truth, never the object of a rational demonstration. But faith recognizes guilt as a fact of unfathomable gravity and the necessity of atonement is based upon this fact. The human situation is desperate, and it cannot be transformed, fellowship with God is impossible save through an intervention in the human situation, a re-establishment of man's relation to God by God

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 444.

2. Ibidem.

Himself.[1]

Drastic measures must be taken to deal with a dark and dismal human condition. If the inclusive Holy Will of God to possess man for Himself across the unfathomable abyss of sin and guilt is to be realized, God must act to bridge the chasm. How has God acted to accomplish this purpose? Brunner propounds his answer to this question in his explication of the role of the "Mediator".

(3) The Mediator and His Role

In exploring the above line of Emil Brunner's Christological thought it should be borne in mind that this profound thinker is a "Theologian of the Word of God." This is to say that he inclines to a "Logos" Christology. For him, "the Christian religion is summed up in the revelation of God in Jesus Christ: . . . the Logos as the personal Divine Presence, and His self-communication."[2] Brunner believes that when the Christian Church originally answered the question, Who is He?, by saying that Christ was the Divine Word, it was an answer of the keenest insight. "Rightly understood, this reply contained the

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 292.

2. B., The Mediator, p. 212. Cf. B., The Word and the World, pp. 26ff.

whole truth. He is that which God has to say to us -- what can there be beyond that?"[1] The Logos, then, is primarily what God says to man; it is God's announcement for man's salvation of His own Name and His own Person. However, Brunner does not mean to put all of his Christological emphasis on the concept of the Logos. "Christ is not merely the Logos, He is not merely that which God has to say to us, but He is at the same time also the Mediator."[2] There is sound logic behind this designation:

> For this very reason He is the Mediator, because He shares in two worlds, because He has to point in both directions. He has a share in the sinful corrupted world and He has a share in the divine eternal world of perfection. He is the Bridge between both.[3]

In the paradoxical Nature of the Mediator is the revelation of the basic human contradiction and need -- and the answer to that need. "The Mediator in His Person, by His very 'constitution', is the mediation between the Creator and the fallen creature in a double connection: as the Mediator of revelation and the Mediator of reconciliation."[4] This title very definitely includes the divine reconciling action.

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 234.
2. Ibid., p. 581.
3. Ibid., p. 532. Brunner appends the important reminder: "The Bridge, however, is there to be crossed."
4. Ibid., p. 406.

> When we speak of the "Person" and the "Work" of the Mediator we mean exactly the same thing. . . . He is what He does and He does what He is, and both of these statements mean that He reunites man, who is separated, indeed practically severed from his divine origin, with God.[1]

Actually, "Mediator" is a name that is charged with functional significance. And, with the passage of time, Brunner's thought moves steadily in the direction of a "functional" understanding of the Person of Jesus Christ and full subscription to Melanchthon's oft-quoted dictum: "To know Christ is to know His benefits."[2] Yet to continue a theological discussion along this line under the sovereign principle of "Truth as Encounter" demands that "benefits" be set in a personalized frame of reference. To meet this requirement Brunner calls into service the traditional concept of the three-fold office of Prophet,

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 490.

2. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 273: Hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia eius cognoscere. Cf. B., The Mediator, pp. 80, 268fn., 407. The early references are somewhat in the nature of obiter dicta, for Brunner is not yet prepared to draw out the implications of the Reformer's famous Christological axiom in accordance with the ruling concept of Wahrheit als Begegnung. In fact, in one passage of The Mediator his reserved approval of Melanchthon's formula is followed by a serious objection: "It contains the germ of the whole anthropocentric point of view of later Lutheranism, and this simply means of religious egoism. Man occupies the centre of the picture, with his need for salvation, not God and His glory" (p. 408).

Priest and King. In the second volume of the Dogmatics this venerable rubric is largely employed in dealing with the saving work of the Mediator, and rightly so, because: "In the doctrine of the Three 'Offices' of Christ we are once again reminded of the truth that we know Jesus through God's action in Him."[1] In all of these offices -- especially in that of "Priest" -- Christ, the divine-human Mediator, is active on behalf of man the sinner. What the Mediator does as Prophet, Priest and King manifests what He is in the same categories, and vice versa. In summary form, the triadic treatment of the work of Christ means to the believer through encounter in faith that --

> We are reconciled "through the Blood" of Jesus Christ, redeemed from the power of darkness, and transferred in "the Kingdom of the Son of His Love", and in faith we receive the highest revelation of His merciful Will. . . . As the sinful heart is that which is separated from God, blind to God, and opposed to God, so faith -- which is the opposite of sin -- is the inward eye which is opened to the reality of God, the heart which is reconciled to God, and the will which is united to God in obedience.[2]

While it is not necessary in this discussion to examine in

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 273. Brunner devotes all of Chapter 11, plus the major part of a lengthy appendix, to an interpretation of this "reminder in triplicate."

2. Ibid., pp. 306-307. This gathering together of the threads of thought on the "benefits" of the three "Offices" makes good devotional reading. It sounds much more liturgical than theological, as does indeed the whole preceding elucidation.

detail Brunner's explication of the Munus triplex, it should be emphasized that the categories embraced in this functional scheme do lend themselves with a certain naturalness to the inductive methodology to which, as he states and justifies in the opening of the eleventh chapter of The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, he is now committed:

> Since, . . . in this section of the present work of Dogmatics we are going to use an inductive, and not -- as is usual -- a deductive method, we shall begin not with the Person, but with the Work of Christ. For the Person of Christ can be discerned from His work. In so doing we are following a line which has already been traced for us beforehand, by one of the most profound statements of Reformation theology: Hoc est Christum cognoscere, beneficia eius cognoscere.[1]

This methodology receives even prior support in the Christological deliverances of St. Paul, and especially in the Pauline oriented doctrine of the early Church. "Here the

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1. B., Op. cit., p. 271. It is worthwhile to note that later on, in the beginning of his chapter on "The Person of Jesus Christ", Brunner adduces the divine example in the Incarnation as a sufficient warrant for an a posteriori method in Christology: "It is the miracle of the divine condescension towards us that He wills to meet us in a human being. If God has opened this way to Himself for us, we ought to follow it too; we have no right to try to reverse the process. That is why the Gospels, the record of the human life of Jesus are placed first in the New Testament, in order that, meeting the Man, Christ Jesus, we may through this encounter, come to the knowledge of God" (p. 322).

work, the gift -- and, if this word may be allowed -- the 'achievement' of Christ is always in the foreground, while the mystery of the Person is in the background."[1] Though there is no real clash of Christologies in the New Testament, nevertheless, "The Christology of the Primitive Church -- as against the Johannine Christology -- is determined more by the verb than the substantive."[2]

As has been intimated, Emil Brunner put much more emphasis on the Incarnation in The Mediator than he did in his later theologizing. In a preliminary note on Section III: "The Dominion of God", he declares: "From the outset our concern has been directed towards the central point, where time and eternity merge into each other and become one, and where the Christian faith took its rise: the Incarnation of the Word."[3] But after a decade

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 271.

2. Ibidem. Cf. Truth as Encounter, pp. 88, 156.

3. B., The Mediator, p. 547. Yet this is not an exclusive preoccupation. Several passages portend a movement of thought in another direction, e. g.: "His 'being' as the Mediator, however, cannot be severed from His 'work' as Mediator; for this Person is not static but dynamic." (p. 493) And on an earlier page he says: "While we lay so much stress on the fact that the Person of the Mediator is in itself the revelation, at the same time we do not wish to suggest -- as will be seen directly -- that we either ignore the "Work" of the Mediator or even relegate it to a subordinate position." (p. 407).

of further reflection, in his Wahrheit als Begegnung (1938), he is ready to confess to a change of mind:

> I must correct at this point certain emphases in my own book The Mediator. . . . [Ancient dogma] gave the Christian faith a false orientation about the being instead of the work of Christ. . . . The Person of the Mediator must also be understood as an act of God, namely as His coming to us in revelation and redemption. . . . Even the Person of the Mediator is comprehended with the verb, if I may so express it, not with the substantive. One could actually say: Jesus Christ, even and especially in His divine-human being as Person, is God's act, just as He is the Word of God.[1]

True to the acknowledgment of having "seen the light" in this matter, Brunner's promised "corrective" appears in The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption (1950). Here the concentration of thought is no longer on the "Person" but the "Work" of the Mediator. And apostolic sanction for this shift of attention is reiterated:

> The distinctive element in the apostolic language about the Divine Son is this: that it never -- as was the case in later periods of the development of doctrine in the Church -- was regarded as an isolated doctrine, but always one which was in direct and immediate connexion with the Work of Jesus, with the salvation given in Him, with the revelation, reconciliation and royal Lordship of God.[2]

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1. B., Truth as Encounter, p. 155f.

2. B., Op. cit., p. 350. Brunner concludes with a statement that reflects his ruling theological "passion": "Christological doctrine in the narrower sense, the doctrine of the Person of Jesus, is also 'truth as encounter'."

His amended viewpoint is most obvious in the reversal of the order of treatment of "Person" and "Work" -- "Work" now comes first -- and, as has been pointed out, in the strong dependence on the old Munus triplex doctrine to carry the weight of the new emphasis. So thoroughly does the theologian set himself to vindicate the value of his altered approach to his subject that, at the end of the chapter on "The Saving Work of God in Jesus Christ" and the appendix that follows, he apparently runs out of ideas for the development of constructive thought in the next chapter on "The Person of Jesus Christ." However, this point will be criticized later.

In Brunner's last major piece of writing, his Dogmatics: Volume III, some statements can be found which tend to present a more unified picture of Person and Work. "It is precisely the complete congruence of Word and action which gives us certainty of His divine authority."[1] So, in spite of vacillation, and regardless of final judgment on his efforts, what Brunner would seem to be trying to say is that neither the Work nor the Person of Jesus Christ can be truly understood unless conceived in relation to each other in the one Mediator. Neither the

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1. B. The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, p. 198. Cf. Ibid., pp. 101, 174f.

Incarnation nor the Atonement can be interpreted properly if considered in isolation and from the standpoint of abstract speculation. The God-man can only be understood and confessed in the integrity of His being by considering His Person and Work in harmonious relationship each to the other. God is asserting His gift and His act. This single solitary Person in "being" and "action" must be -- and is -- the Sinless One who identifies Himself wholly with man and yet is absolutely united with God. In a totally unique union and unity He does for sinful humanity that which man in no wise is able to do for himself. Through these dimensions of the Mediatôw, the key figure in the drama of Reconciliation, Brunner believes that God reveals Himself specifically and acts concretely -- facts which become known in the encounter of faith.

ii. Interpreting the Cross

In dealing with the "Priestly" Work of Jesus Christ, Brunner places great emphasis on the "Cross" and its meaning. In the section on "Reconciliation" in the latter part of The Mediator, Martin Luther gets a vigorous nod of approval for his definition of Christian Theology as theologia crucis, and in this connection the whole struggle of the Reformation is seen as a striving "for the right

interpretation of the Cross."[1] The understanding of the Bible and the understanding of God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ can only ensue from the understanding of the Cross.

(1) The Cross in History and in Faith-encounter

In discussing the idea of a theodicy -- the attempt to justify the ways of God to men -- Brunner can see no evasion of the fact that the living God is "The God of History" and goes on to say,

> The problem of [theodicy] is presented in its most acute form at the centre of the Christian revelation, at the Cross of Christ. The crucifixion of Jesus is an event in history, from the standpoint of the Christian faith it is the central fact in history.[2]

The Christian is confronted with the harsh reality of all manner of injustices in history -- epitomized in the cruel death of Jesus -- but he is also confronted with the undeniable fact that God is Lord of all this history. How, then, in the face of this two-fold fact can the Christian maintain his faith in the God of righteousness and love? It is the Cross alone that provides a sign-post in the maze of this dilemma:

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 435.

2. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 177.

> Here, at the Cross, it becomes evident that evil is that which God does not will and does not do, and at the same time, that God has such power over this evil, which He does not will, that He is able to make it an instrument of His saving work. . . . At this point it is granted to us to have a glimpse into the mystery of the divine government of the world; . . . As soon as we look away from the Cross and try to explain world history . . . the curtain falls once more, and we are left gazing into impenetrable darkness.[1]

The Cross in the midst of history and the Cross as the illuminant of history is the solution of the problem of theodicy, not theoretically but in an "existential" and practical way.

One of the basic assumptions which underlies all of Brunner's theology must not be overlooked in this discussion, namely, the absolute distinction between time and eternity. This appears, as has been noted, in his treatment of the Incarnation. Out of the differentiation that is made between the historical appearance of the Mediator and His real nature as the Saviour through whom God and men are reconciled there emerges the concept that the Atonement as such, in its inner meaning, is not a fact of history. In keeping with the deity of the God-man it belongs to "super-history", and is known through spiritual perception, i.e. by faith. However, this is not to say

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 182.

that Brunner thereby denies the actuality of the Crucifixion. "The cross of Christ on Golgotha is a historic fact just as truly as the murder of Julius Caesar in Rome."[1] It is only the significance of the Cross to faith -- the Atonement -- which takes place in"super-history". He explains the matter thus:

> The Atonement is not history. The Atonement, the expiation of human guilt, the covering of sin through His sacrifice, is not anything which can be conceived from the point of view of history. This event does not belong to the historical plane. It is super-history; it lies in the dimension which no historian knows in so far as he is merely an historian. It is an "event" which is only an "event" for faith.[2]

It is only in the contemplation of the Cross that the Holiness of God can really be known. It is there that the boundlessness of His Holiness and Love are convincingly manifested: "The Cross is the only place where the loving, forgiving, merciful God is revealed in such a way that we perceive that His Holiness and His Love are equally infinite."[3] By way of the Cross there also comes

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1. B., Faith, Hope and Love, p. 21. Cf. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 243: "No serious historian doubts [that] . . . Jesus of Nazareth . . . was hated by the Jewish religious leaders, and finally . . . was crucified by them, and by the Roman Procurator Pontius Pilate."

2. B., The Mediator, p. 504.

3. Ibid., p. 470.

the disclosure of the sinfulness of man. No matter how much men may turn their eyes inwardly upon their souls, they cannot see themselves as they really are until they behold the Cross of Christ. "Only at the Cross does man see fully what it is that separates him from God."[1] And again: "It is the mystery of the divine wisdom that the same event which reveals to us love and righteousness, also discloses to us our actual situation."[2] Truly here at the Cross there is implicit "a strange and wonderful dialectic."[3] Here in faith-encounter there is for man a double identification which Brunner describes and comments upon as follows:

> When I, the sinner, identify myself with the man who was crucified as a blasphemer against God, there also takes place a second identification, namely an identification with Jesus, the Christ, the Son of God. It is not the negative word "You are a sinner" that is the authentic message of the Cross. It is only the presupposition for . . . truly hearing also the authentic message. . . . What man all his life long has vainly attempted to reach through morals, through education and self-education, through piety and religion -- peace with God, salvation, life in fellowship with God -- God bestows this upon him in free and kingly grace. He bestows upon him reconciliation with God. He

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 452.

2. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 296.

3. B., The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, p. 196. Cf. B., Faith, Hope and Love, p. 21.

> bestows upon him righteousness, that is, he makes him right with God. He quite simply declares, "You are right with me."[1]

It is at the Cross in the encounter of faith that the whole man is "summoned" to receive a completely new character as a person in an act in which he "is purely receptive, in no way actively takes the initiative."[2]

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, p. 196. Cf. Ibid., p. 287.

2. Ibid., p. 197. The role of man in receiving the benefits of the Cross-event is as much a matter of concern to Brunner in this volume of Dogmatics as it was some fifteen years before when Natural Theology came from the press. There is the same desire and intention to predicate to man a more "active" participation in his "salvation" than that allowed by the "block and stone" (truncus et lapis) status of the Confessional writings, and at the same time keep inviolate the Scriptural and evangelical principles of sola gratia and sola fide. There is, of course, immediate and intensive engagement with this problem in the chapter on "Conversion" (q.v., pp. 276-289). Here Brunner is naturally critical of Churches whose dogma favours "a divine monergism, in which nothing of the dialogue-character of our relation to God is left" (p. 277). His own conviction is stated with a ring of boldness: "We ourselves have also something to do here, whether this is labelled synergism or not" (p. 282. Italics mine). Actually Brunner is in little danger of being called a synergist. For, as he has previously explained, when man does his "something" in repentance -- which means hearing the message from the Cross and "turning" far "back" to the Fall from God's Creation and finding there in the beginning his own authentic "God-created being" -- it is in reality a divinely initiated and divinely effectuated "returning," because: "This can never happen through our own action: it happens when we let ourselves be told 'He has done it for you'" (p. 281). So, Brunner is forced to acknowledge: "It is once again the same paradox as everywhere appears where faith is the theme: the new life is effected on the one hand only through the repentance of man, and on the other hand only

(2) The Scriptural Witness and the Cross Triumphant

Brunner finds the salient conceptions having to do with the interpretation of Christ's death on the Cross thoroughly interwoven in New Testament fabric. Our understanding of the meaning of the Cross as God's "mighty act" of Salvation "leads us to the heart of the central doctrine of revelation and salvation in the New Testament as a whole."[1] Moreover, the teachings of Jesus are "never to be separated from His [redemptive] action. They are the commentary on His action."[2] Yet it was the Apostle Paul who first connected the two elements: "the death of Jesus and the forgiveness of sins."[3] Paul was the first to interpret in theological terms all that the disciples had received directly from the lips of Jesus. The teaching of Jesus could only be perceived in full clarity, in relation to His life and death, "after His life on earth had been closed by death."[4] What Paul has to say about the re-

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through the act and speech or speech and act of God" (p. 283).

1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 287. Apropos of this centrality Brunner later says: "The Cross has therefore rightly become the Sign of Christianity"(Ibid., p. 297).

2. Ibid., p. 293.

3. Ibid., p. 292.

4. Ibid., p. 294.

demptive and reconciling work of the Mediator and His Cross is a natural sequel to the Synoptic Gospels.

Both diversity and unity are found in the Scriptural message of the Atonement. And, according to Brunner, there is something of merit in all the traditional theories of the atoning work of Christ with their grounding in different portions of Scripture. In several pages of The Mediator and the second volume of Dogmatics a strong savour of the "classic" view of the Atonement can be detected.[1] While he holds no brief for absolute dualism between good and evil, Brunner believes with Paul -- and with Jesus Himself -- that Christ the "Victor" was, in the work of redemption, in active opposition to a very real power of evil. The total expression of the life of Jesus is divine energy on the offensive against all the forces ranged against God.

Here we see and feel the elements of conflict and

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1. Gustaf Aulén (Christus Victor, 1951), a vigorous exponent of this view, is reluctant to accept Brunner as a fellow protagonist. Rather does he assign him to the Anselmian-Calvinistic school of Atonement thought. Yet he does concede that Brunner is to be commended for his appreciation of Irenaeus who first among the Fathers set down the Patristic (classic) doctrine of the Atonement in a clear, comprehensive and Biblical way. "Brunner is fully justified in claiming, in his excellent study of Irenaeus in Der Mittler, that the death of Christ has essentially the same significance for Irenaeus as for Paul" (p. 29).

> victory, of haste and expansion, of pleading and seeking, of an urgent and aggressive movement, in which the leader strides forward in hot haste. It is a heavenly offensive against the historical sphere dominated by the "Prince of this world." . . . We are glad that today we . . . see in Jesus . . . first and foremost the royal Hero who wages a dangerous battle and who is filled absolutely with the will to conquer.[1]

Brunner draws heavily upon the epistles of Paul for the reinforcement of this view. He conceives of the idea embodied in the term redemption as definitely bolstering the triumphant aspect of the atoning Cross:

> Here the idea is that of a struggle for power between God and the hostile powers of darkness which enslave and corrupt man, from which, however, God through Christ rescues the booty, by delivering man from "the power of darkness" and translating him"into the Kingdom of the Son of His love" (Colossians 1:13). The Cross achieves a real spoliatio hostium which ends in a triumphal procession for the victor (Colossians 2:15). In this process sinful man is . . . snatched away from the powers of darkness into God's keeping, but in the process he experiences his own liberation -- that is redemption.[2]

In the teaching and preaching of Brunner the regenerative aspect of the work of the Victor over sin is definitely recognized. The liberation effected by the conquest of Christ is not only a "freeing from", it is also a "freeing into." This great Atonement-truth is

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 511.

2. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 285.

forcefully presented in a sermon on "The Meaning of the Last Supper:"

> The death of Jesus Christ . . . becomes the victory of God over you and your godlessness, then He draws you into His own eternal life, enabling you to share in His resurrection and making you by this means a new creation.[1]

There is a Kingdom of God, both realized and potential, which is the rule of One who through His holy Love overcomes the resistance of the Evil One, exercises His kingly power through the forgiveness of sins, and re-creates the heart that was once hostile and rebellious, making it over into one which is full of the will to serve. Under the sub-title of "The Royal Work of Jesus" Brunner emphasizes the objective, sanctifying influence of the Christ who died on Calvary: "Through the word of the Cross received in faith, the new man, the man who serves God is created (Romans 12:1ff), who no longer lives on himself and for himself, but on and for the love of God."[2] But this is "jumping the queue" in Brunner's progression of thought.

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1. B., The Great Invitation, p. 122.

2. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 300. Cf. Ibid., p. 296: "The man who perceives and accepts the forgiving love of God from the Cross of Christ, . . . lives no longer on his own efforts, but upon grace."

(3) Objective and Subjective Theories of Atonement

Among the various theories of the Atonement that have appeared in the history of dogma, that of Anselm of Canterbury contains, in Brunner's judgment the larger share of truth. His reasoning is cogent: "What gives Anselm's thought its superiority is the fact that it starts from the objective fact of guilt."[1] It is only against the background of this reality that God's self-movement and forgiving love appear in all their depth and magnitude. A shallow and minimizing view of guilt begets a like view of the Incarnation and Atonement, and Anselm's view of guilt is never shallow or minimizing. However, there is a serious weakness in his theory in that it "tends to become one-sided and crudely objective."[2] Brunner therefore feels obliged to say:

> It is here that our way parts from Anselm, who thinks it possible to deduce a priori from his concept of God the fact of reconciliation. It is this a priori construction that gives his doctrine the fatal trait of rational calculation, which makes this theory look not merely strange, but also sinister. In this connexion I should like to point out one thing more. We agree with Anselm that there is an objective necessity in reconciliation, but we completely disagree with him if he thinks of this reconciliation as being a sacrifice by which God's wrath has to be appeased. In Biblical testimony God is never the object of reconciliation; no-

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1. B., The Scandal of Christianity, p. 87.

2. B., The Mediator, p. 475.

> where do we find the idea that God has to be reconciled by Christ. God is always the subject of reconciliation. He reconciles man to himself.[1]

It is most unfortunate that post-Reformation theology, taking its cue from Anselm, "passed beyond Biblical testimony and . . . caused the misunderstanding that the Christian doctrine of Atonement is a relapse into primitive sacrificial mythology."[2] The death of Christ on the Cross becomes a kind of peace-offering to a vengeful Deity. Instead of being man's Salvation, Christ becomes the mere instrument of his salvation.

The "subjective" theory of Atonement originated by Abelard receives a measure of qualified approval from Emil Brunner: "What Abelard says is true, but it is not the whole truth, nor indeed is it the fundamental truth."[3] This mediaeval theologian "fathered" that conception of

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1. B., The Scandal of Christianity, p. 88f.

2. Ibid., p. 89.

3. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 288. This statement actually represents a degree of moderation of the antipathy expressed some years before in The Mediator, q.v., p. 530, where Brunner writes of "the Rationalist Abelard" whose doctrine was "eagerly adopted and carried forward by those typical Rationalists, the Socinians" with such nullifying effect that "during the period of the Enlightenment the doctrine of the Atonement almost entirely disappeared, and could not be regained even by German Idealism." Brunner's heaviest blows against the subjectivist viewpoint were of course delivered in Die Mystik und das Wort, (1924).

the Atonement which, growing and increasing in strength in the teaching of Schleiermacher and Ritschl, became the model of modern liberal theology. In its initial form the concept was simply this: "that the death of Jesus on the Cross gives us a supreme demonstration of the Love of God which should kindle a corresponding love in our hearts."[1] However, drawing out the implications of Abelard's comparatively simple and innocuous doctrine, modern Idealistic thought has claimed that --

> if man is to give himself wholly to the work of the present, he must leave his past entirely behind him. It is not guilt which needs to be eradicated, but the sense of guilt. It is not man's separation from God which needs to be overcome, but merely the -- mistaken -- opinion that he is separated from God. Reconciliation (or atonement) consists in clearing up a misunderstanding, namely, that man is not from the very outset already united with God.[2]

Such has been the deplorable "advancement" in the subjectivist view of the Atonement since the days of its origin. The denial of real objectivity to man's guilt is devastating in its effect upon evangelical Christology, for, in Brunner's critical judgment, ipso facto, the door is opened wide to a Socinian estimate of Jesus Christ. He is no more vere Deus and vere homo, but, He becomes the

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 288.

2. Ibid., p. 289.

Ideal of mankind in another form -- religious, aesthetic or moral. It could be said that the subjective theory invalidates the line of "necessity" in evangelical atonement thought -- the reality of great guilt requires a surpassingly great objective deed, which, in turn, requires a Doer of that deed who is none other than God Himself.

(4) The "Balanced" View of Atonement

Brunner believes that in contrasting the Anselmic/Abelardian viewpoints he has prepared the way for setting forth his own understanding of the Atonement:

> This contrast between two opposing classical theories shows us the way for our own interpretation. On the one hand, certainly with Anselm, we are concerned about this "must" -- how are we to understand it? -- not as an a priori, deductive, unconditioned truth, but as a posteriori, and conditioned -- but we are likewise dealing with an Event which includes faith, as in the view of Abelard. We are not dealing with a purely subjective or a purely objective process, but with an Event which is both objective and subjective at the same time, a truth of "encounter."[1]

While it becomes apparent in the course of his developing thought that he leans heavily toward the "objective", Brunner does try with evident sincerity, even in The Mediator, to make a real place for the "subjective" in

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 290.

his Atonement theorizing: "The emphasis on the objective character of the Atonement does not rule out the necessity for a subjective process; indeed, this subjective process is really the aim of the Atonement."[1] This is to say: "It is only in this subjective experience, in faith, that the Atonement becomes real."[2] But, for all the forthrightness of these statements, Brunner again seems to take away with his left hand what his right hand bestows. He immediately counters his preceding affirmations by saying: "But this subjective experience is completely objective in character. For this is what it means: that my 'self' is crossed out, displaced and replaced by Christ, the Divine Word."[3] His argument is now deadlocked and the only way out of the impasse is to say: "the Atonement in its paradoxical combination of the subjective and the objective . . . is the unfathomable mystery of God."[4] Yet Brunner doggedly maintains that for all of its paradoxical and mysterious nature the truth about the atoning work

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1. Op. cit., p. 522.

2. Ibid., p. 524.

3. Ibidem. Italics mine.

4. Ibid., p. 528. As such, like other great mysteries relating to the Person and Work of the Mediator, it is a mystery "into which we cannot and ought not to penetrate."

of Jesus Christ is still truth in both of its aspects:

> That which is expressed outwardly and that which is spoken within the heart, the Christ for us and the Christ in us, are one and the same God. This is the reason why faith, which is most subjective, personal, and interior, is at the same time also most objective; and that the Atonement, which is so wholly objective . . . is at the same time the most personal and the most subjective fact there is. Indeed, we are . . . on false lines when we separate the thought of the fact of salvation from the appropriation of salvation. . . . Salvation is neither doctrine nor conviction concerning a doctrine, but the Word of God in Christ as it speaks to us in the heart; indeed it is God Himself as He speaks in us.[1]

According to Brunner, any theory of the Atonement which, in contrast to Abelardian subjectivism or the extremely objectivist viewpoint of Anselm, approach more nearly the "whole truth" and the "fundamental truth" should be truly objective, substitutionary, and with a Godward direction. He further believes that the truth about the Atonement which should be central in Christian teaching is that which deals with the ideas of satisfaction and penalty. He points out that these are ideas that great theologians before him emphasized and that many teachings of the Scriptures support. The New Testament -- in spite of "humanistic" objections from numerous sources --

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 528. Thus, long before the day of Wahrheit als Begegnung, in his thinking about the Atonement Brunner seeks to cope with the problem of Objectivism versus Subjectivism through the interjection of the truth-as-encounter principle, though he does not yet employ this term.

is not afraid of pressing the conception of guilt. Brunner's own words may well be quoted in this connection:

> The New Testament is not afraid of pressing this general conception of guilt -- this economic legal image. . . . A debt must be paid. Man cannot pay. Guilt costs. Man cannot pay the price. . . . The conception of the "cost" and the "price" denotes the objective condition for the revelation of grace, an objectivity which is alien to God, and yet is none the less retained by Him: the reality of wrath, the necessity for punishment. This must take place, the movement which leads to man must pass through this point. But this "necessity" forms part of the Divine Holiness.[1]

It must be strictly noted that this "necessity" does not come from the side of man, so it cannot be said by man that the Cross had to happen. Rather is it true that the Cross is the only means by which the absolute Holiness and the absolute Mercy of God can be revealed together. "Hence, the Cross, conceived as the expiatory, penal sacrifice of the Son of God, is the fulfillment of the Scriptural revelation of God, in its most paradoxical, incomprehensible guise."[2]

But Brunner has something more to say about the doctrine of the Atonement and in saying this "something more" he makes a positive contribution to the subject. He points out that in the New Testament there is no one-sided-

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 471. Cf. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 285.

2. Ibid., p. 473.

ness visible in the doctrine as it is there presented. The message of the Cross has both diversity and unity -- and unity in diversity. The Cross has a number of revealing and complementary facets. This truth is confirmed by the fact -- and a very important fact to Brunner -- that two series of parabolic statements explaining the meaning of the Atonement are to be found in the New Testament. The first series, dealing with the economic-legal angle has already been mentioned; the second, overlooked by Anselm and the Reformers, has by its omission resulted in a poorly proportioned view of the atoning work of Christ. Thereupon Brunner gives his attention to the latter with the purpose in mind of developing a better balanced and more harmonious view.

The second series of analogies is drawn from the practice of the cultus, with its emphasis on sacrifice and the shedding of blood. Of its relationship to the one earlier considered, i.e. the one taken from the practice of law dealing with debts, Brunner writes: "Both merge into one in the idea of expiation, and indeed of substitutionary and complete expiation, which constitutes the divine objective basis of the Atonement."[1] Of all the

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 459.

kinds of sacrifice that have ever been offered in the religious history of mankind, the most important by far is the expiatory sacrifice which is intended to remove some obstacle that disturbs the personal relation between God and man. Man, debarred from fellowship with God by his dreadful sin and guilt -- guilt which has in it the very sting of death -- finds himself in a sore predicament: he cannot live without God, but, on the other hand, he cannot live with God as long as guilt remains with him. Yet the removal of such greatness of guilt requires an equivalent greatness of personal sacrifice which man is totally unable to make. Since man cannot offer an equivalent sacrifice and thus remove the barrier and restore communion between himself and his Maker, it must be God alone who can do this.

> God alone can make this sacrifice. He alone can expiate, can "cover" guilt as though it had never been. . . . It is indeed God Himself who takes everything upon Himself. "He who spared not His own Son, how shall he not freely with Him give us all things?" Thus in the New Testament the Cross of Christ is conceived as the self-offering of God. It is God who does it, it is God Himself who suffers, it is God who takes the burden upon Himself.[1]

Brunner is convinced that all the vital elements impinging

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1. B., The Mediator, pp. 482-483. Cf. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 284.

upon the Person and Work of Christ may be gathered up in the one idea of substitution. "If the Cross really means the dealing of God with humanity, then we cannot interpret it in any other way than in the sense of the doctrine of substitutionary atonement."[1] The Passion represented by the Cross has divine significance if it is not merely human suffering but divine action. Brunner is sure of the latter. Christ as the priestly Mediator is both the One sacrificing and the One being sacrificed. "It is indeed God Himself who takes everything upon Himself."[2] The point must be made again and again -- it is God in His very own Person who expiates and reconciles.

(5) The Universality and Finality of the Cross

While the divine reconciling act is, in a real sense, directed toward the individual, it is never for the individual apart from his fellowmen. "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." Brunner believes that "world" in this Christological confession should receive a heavy accent, and he states the ground for so believing:

> The fact that [Christ] is thus one with God, in

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 503.

2. Ibid., p. 482.

> such a way that the cause of God is absolutely His own cause . . . makes it possible for Him to make Himself the servant of humanity, who gives His life for the race. The fact that He is one with God constitutes the basis of His solidarity with man. Such an identification with humanity is beyond the power of any mere human being; this can only be done by the man who was God.[1]

Man was not created as an isolated individual and neither can he be redeemed as such. "God always deals with humanity as a whole."[2] Herein is the marvel of His redeeming grace:

> The wonder of redemption is only known for what it really is when we see that the God who sees us before Him as sinful humanity has had mercy upon us all. This is what is meant . . . by the doctrine that the Son of God assumed human nature. By doing this He made it evident that humanity as a whole is the object of His activity; it already implies the universality of the divine will of redemption, the significance of the fact of Christ.[3]

The achievement of the Cross is indeed amazing in its magnitude, and doubly so. It is something done for man by

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1. B., The Mediator, p. 499.

2. Ibid., p. 321.

3. Ibidem. In a footnote Brunner says, "It is obvious that this does not imply any 'Universalism', any unconditional salvation of all, which would diminish the seriousness of the Judgment. We know the universalism of the divine will to reconcile and redeem only in a sense which calls for decision, thus as a will which it is possible to disobey." This footnote is good protection against the charge which, in the first volume of Dogmatics, he levels at Barth: "That through Jesus Christ, all, believers and unbelievers, are saved from the wrath of God and participate in redemption through Jesus Christ . . . is what Karl Barth teaches" (The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 348).

God Himself, and done by Him for the whole of humanity. These are truths of staggering proportions which can only be known in the encounter of faith.

In concluding this division of the section on "The Work of Jesus Christ" it is appropriate to quote Brunner's view of the finality of the Cross:

> If this be the meaning of the Cross, then the Cross, and thus the Atonement and Revelation, are absolutely unique. If here the act really proceeds from God, and if it is true that here something was actually done, on the Cross, then this event is such that by its very nature it is capable niether of repetition nor of extension in time and in space. It is a "moment" and only one "moment". It is the decisive event, alongside of which there is no other. It is a point which only faith can see, but it is a point at which all else is decided.[1]

There is then in the message of the Cross, as Emil Brunner interprets it, diversity and unity, uniqueness and finality, because these qualities are also integral to the

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1. B., The Mediator, pp. 503-504. Cf. B., Faith, Hope and Love, pp. 21-22. Here Brunner says of the Cross: "If it is really true that there we meet God in His incredible love for us in spite of what we are -- and faith knows that this is so -- then this fact is of unique importance. It means that God, mystery in Himself, has removed the veil and revealed His heart to man, has changed man's condition entirely, from that of a godless rebel to that of a beloved son. . . . For the believer . . . this uniqueness is not relative but absolute, because nowhere else in history has God revealed Himself in the Cross of His Son. It is absolutely unique because only there has that change in the situation of man taken place that is not merely a change but the change which we call 'redemption' or 'reconciliation'."

Crucified. In the Work of Jesus Christ, as in His Person, -- and because it is the key to His Person -- there is more than "eye can see" or "tongue can utter", even "eye" and "tongue" of faith itself. So "mystery" and "paradox" veil the "Tree", even as they veil the Man on the Tree. But in the encounter of faith man can stand in the shadow of the Cross and know that here the God of holy Love has measured and met his critical need in a wondrous and utterly gracious way. For, as Brunner says: "The message of the Cross is . . . the revealation of the incomprehensible, unconditional love of God. . . . The love that . . . reveals itself as pure Agape."[1]

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1. B., The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 295.

CHAPTER IV

A CRITICAL COMPARISON OF THE CHRISTOLOGICAL THOUGHT OF PETER TAYLOR FORSYTH AND EMIL BRUNNER

The writing of this chapter is undertaken with a dual intent. On the one hand the purpose is to determine and clarify the similarities and differences in the Christological views of Forsyth and Brunner and in this way to show the relationship of the theologians to each other. Hopefully, this will be effected by the comparison of the major issues discovered in the respective approaches to Christology and treatments of this theme to be found in the works of the two thinkers. On the other hand the intention is to glean from their doctrines the essential elements believed to have abiding significance in Christological construction on an evangelical basis. It should be further stated that prior to an advance upon the main objective it is deemed advisable to reconnoitre with some care the respective theological presuppositions and methodology of Forsyth and Brunner. Such a preliminary tactic should provide clues as to the relative strength of

their Christological positions and contribute to the success of the major undertaking.

For evaluative purposes the following norms will serve as standards of judgment: In the first place it is believed that the doctrinal views under consideration should be consistent within themselves, that they should be as free as possible from weakening inconsistencies and self-contradictions. In the second place, it is believed that the Christological thought of the two men should be congenial with the evangelical experience of the Christian Church, this being regarded as the experience in faith of Jesus Christ as the true and only Son of God incarnate and atoning, "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven." The pattern of Christological teaching as represented in classical formulae, particularly that of Chalcedon, and in kenotic theory will be kept in mind in the progress of the chapter.

In this comparative enterprise a rather consistent method will be followed as each aspect of the Person of Christ is brought under examination. In the first place the thought of Forsyth and Brunner will be compared in an effort to bring out their convergent and divergent points of view. Secondly, in elucidating their viewpoints, it is intended that any inconsistencies that are discovered in their thought will be noted and commented upon. Wherever

additional exposition of their views is deemed advisable and opportune, such will be given. Finally, there will be a highlighting of those distinctive emphases which are considered to be most serviceable in the structuring of Christology on an evangelical foundation. Before launching into the proposed comparison, and by way of introducing it, there will be a short discussion of Brunner's knowledge, or lack of knowledge, of the earlier theologian.

INTRODUCTION - Brunner's Knowledge and Acknowledgment of P. T. Forsyth

In an unpublished dissertation of the year 1940, R. F. Thompson marshals an impressive array of evidence to support his contention that Forsyth was a "pre-Barthian Barth" but observes that "in some respects Forsyth is closer to Brunner than to Barth."[1] This raises the intriguing question as to whether Brunner was familiar with the writings of Forsyth and, if so, to what degree if any he was influenced -- consciously or unconsciously -- by the British theologian. Thompson is helpful in pointing toward a conclusive answer to such speculation. He quotes from a communication received in late 1939 from the

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1. Robert Franklin Thompson, Peter Taylor Forsyth: A Pre-Barthian (An unpublished Ph.D. dissertation submitted to Drew Theological Seminary of Drew University, Madison, New Jersey, 1940), p. 249.

Reverend F. W. Camfield, one of Forsyth's former students, in answer to a letter of inquiry about Barth's knowledge of the Principal of Hackney College:

> I have not come across any books or articles which tend to draw out the relationship between Forsyth and Barth, and I do not know that any have been written. Of direct connection there is none, for I have recently asked both Barth and Brunner whether they had heard of Forsyth and neither of them had.[1]

Another inquiry on the same subject, written about the same time to the Reverend H. T. Lovell Cocks of the Scottish Congregational Church in Edinburgh, elicited in part the following response: "Karl Barth's son tells me that the work of Forsyth has only recently been brought to the attention of his father, while Brunner a few years ago said he had never heard of Forsyth."[2]

From the aforementioned excerpts it can be definitely assumed that Brunner did not know that Forsyth or his writings had ever existed when Der Mittler was published in 1927. At first thought this blank in his awareness seems rather strange, especially when it is recalled that as a divinity graduate he spent almost a year in England immediately before the outbreak of World War I. At that time (1913-14) P. T. Forsyth was at the peak of his theological career. Some of his greatest books had come from the press

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1. Thompson, Peter Taylor Forsyth: A Pre-Barthian, pp. 177-178. Italics mine.

2. Ibid., p. 179.

a few years earlier and he was in demand all over Britain as a preacher and lecturer. However, a little reflection adduces several reasons why Brunner was unfamiliar with the older man. For one thing, in that short year his main attention seems to have been directed toward studying and mastering the English language, in which later on he was to become quite proficient. For another thing, he had at that time a keener interest in theories and forms of government, such as religious socialism and English and American democracy, than in deeper theological investigation. And again, it may well be that Brunner shared that "fault of perspective" that has long obtained between Europe and other parts of Christendom -- a fault which W. M. Horton has in mind when he says, "Great Britain . . . knows more about the Continent than the Continent knows about Britain."[1] And Bishop John A. T. Robinson is even more to the point in his reference to those who "can still write as though the German-speaking world were the circumference of the theological circle: witness the footnotes in Gollwitzer, Moltmann and Pannenberg!"[2]

If the younger Brunner had a blind eye and a deaf

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1. Walter Marshall Horton, Christian Theology: An Ecumenical Approach (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1955), p. 8.

2. John A. T. Robinson, "Not Radical Enough?", The Christian Century, November 12, 1969, p. 1447.

ear for theological proficiency among thinkers who did not write or speak in German, it was not always thus with him. It is interesting to discover that when he came to write the second volume of his Dogmatics in 1949, he was sufficiently aware of able theologians in Britain to make the following comment:

> It is significant that in modern theology the doctrine of the Work of Christ has been developed to a considerable extent by British theologians. Thus in the middle of the nineteenth century John McLeod Campbell wrote an excellent book on The Nature of the Atonement, from which we can still learn today. Following him, at the beginning of this century, came Peter Taylor Forsyth, with a valuable book on The Work of Christ, in which he discusses with genuine Biblical understanding, various alternative modern theories.[1]

Brunner still leaves us in the dark as to whether he was familiar with The Person and Place of Jesus Christ. But in his discussion of kenosis in this same volume, where an acknowledgment of such familiarity could have come in naturally, he remains quite silent. The "argument from silence" therefore leads to the surmise that he had not at that time read this provocative and original work, a piece

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1. The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 315. Brunner goes on to applaud D. M. Baillie for his "extremely original work, God Was in Christ" and expresses the opinion that his own Christological thought is quite harmonious with that of the Scottish theologian. Baillie, however, as will be further noted, strangely ignored Forsyth in his writing and was quite critical of some of Brunner's views.

of writing much superior to The Work of Christ which has favourable mention.

The only other reference to Forsyth ever made by Brunner, as far as the writer of this thesis has been able to determine, was in connection with a television interview with Vernon Sproxton as reported in The Listener of February 16, 1961. In this interview Sproxton inquires: "Who do you think is our greatest British theologian of recent times?"[1] In answer, Brunner, after a complimentary remark about C. H. Dodd, goes on to say, "As for my field, systematic theology, I would mention a man who died about forty years ago, P. T. Forsyth."[2] From this terse response it is impossible to determine any point either of congeniality or disharmony that the Swiss theologian felt to exist between his own thought and that of Forsyth. This can only be determined by making a comparative examination of their respective positions as these are expressed in their abundant writings. In conclusion, it may be stated with confidence that if their generations had been reversed Forsyth would have been an avid reader of Brunner's works, and would in fact have been most knowl-

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1. "Viewpoint", A Television Interview with Vernon Sproxton, The Listener, February 16, 1961, p. 307.

2. Ibid., p. 308.

edgeable of all the great "German-speaking" theologians who came to such distinction in the second quarter of the twentieth century.

1. Theological Presuppositions and Methodology

Forsyth and Brunner concur in the view, elaborately and emphatically set forth by the latter, that knowledge of ultimate or absolute truth can be gained by man only in the faith-encounter with God in the divine-human Christ (special revelation) in and through whom such truth is revealed to man. Instead of employing Brunner's term of faith-encounter (Begegnung) to describe man's personal relation to God in Jesus Christ, Forsyth time and again uses such phrases as "experience of communion" and "personal contact". However, it is evident that both are talking about essentially the same thing.[1]

In the thought of the two men there is agreement that the principle of personal relation presides over the fact that man in faith can come to a knowledge of ultimate truth, the holy love (agape) of God which is revealed to him. At the same time it is recognized that man cannot

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1. A favorite expression of Forsyth's and one that he uses to describe his own "personal contact with Christ," is "vis-a-vis" (q.v. The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 196). The expression is here identical with Brunner's "face-to-face" designation for the relation between God and man in Christ to which he refers so frequently in Truth as Encounter, pp. 91ff.

know all there is to be known and that there must be communion between Infinitude and finitude, between Eternity and time, between Creator and creature, between God and man, if there is to be communication between the two. Such communion is made possible by and in Jesus Christ, the God-man, who bridges the dividing chasm. At once in Him the redemptive communion between righteous God and sinful man becomes communication in which man receives knowledge of ultimate truth, the holy love of God. In other words, in Christ (special revelation) is the fulfillment of man's relation to God. The redemptive relationship of man to God in Christ serves as the ground for knowledge of absolute truth.

Forsyth and Brunner stand in common and firm opposition to what is usually called nineteenth century Rationalism. They would agree that philosophy is a valid discipline for gaining true knowledge only as an interpretative instrument for faith-thinking, i.e. theologizing. In typically explanatory statements Forsyth says, ". . . unless you have a philosophy, you cannot express the things that theology handles most deeply,"[1] while Brunner declares, "No Christian theologian . . . can carry on his work without using conceptions that are derived from

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1. Forsyth, The Work of Christ, pp. 86-87.

philosophy."[1] In faith-response man reviews and interprets the revealed truth. This necessarily includes the faculty of reason.

As has been shown, Brunner goes to considerable length in setting forth the merits of the principle of personal relation over against Objectivism and Subjectivism in understanding the truth of God.[2] While objective and subjective categories are useful in philosophy and science in achieving the closest possible correspondence between thinking and being they cannot be employed successfully when knowledge of God is the concern of the thinker. This is fundamentally due to the fact that God is the absolute "Someone" and in no sense whatsoever is He "something." Conceived as "something", truth is always at the disposal of the thinker, works in him no transformation and leaves him solitary. The meeting of absolutely personal God with man in the encounter of faith has exactly opposite results, as Brunner maintains in describing the superiority of the personal relationship principle over the tendencies of Objectivism and Subjectivism and the rational concept of truth which they determine. What is made explicit in Brunner's exposition is un-

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1. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 395.

2. See above, pp. 202ff.

doubtedly implicit in the teaching of Forsyth. The latter would agree that the personal relation principle prevents equating truth with an impersonal proposition in which ultimate truth, God, becomes an "it" -- a mere object to which neither God nor man as being or person can be reduced.[1] The principle both prevents absolute truth from being equated with rational understanding and recognizes the place of redeemed man's reason in gaining knowledge of ultimate truth which is revealed to him in faith in and through Jesus Christ. Reason, a faculty of man's being, interprets and seeks to make intelligible the ultimate truth received by man in his faith-response to God in Jesus Christ. In the redemptive relationship of man with God in Christ all other relationships are re-shaped and re-born. Man enters upon a new life and comes into a new relation with his fellow men.

Although Forsyth and Brunner put God's revelation of Himself in Jesus Christ at the very centre of their conception of the knowledge of ultimate or absolute truth, which man receives in the encounter of faith, they differ on several related points. According to Brunner, the formal imago dei, which remained in natural man after the

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1. Cf. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority, p. 53. Forsyth says in part, "Christian truth . . . is not propositional. . . . It means communion with the God self-given to us in Jesus Christ."

fall, consists in a capacity for words (Wortmächtigkeit) and responsibility. This formal image serves as the "point of contact" (Anknüpfungspunkt) for the special revelation of the holy love of God which comes to man in faith-encounter with Jesus Christ. Though Brunner, in the spirit of missionary outreach toward non-believers, had a deep and sustained interest in finding a locus in natural man for the encounter to take place, his Anknüpfungspunkt never seems to acquire a definition that gives real meaning to its purpose.

Correctly identifying a serious weakness in the Barthian system, Brunner commits himself most commendably to an earnest and sincere effort to remedy this weakness. Regrettably and somewhat ironically, failure in this effort can be largely attributed to his inability to dissociate his thought sufficiently from the rigid presuppositions of Karl Barth. In the latter's thought the sola fide and sola gratia principles are given such rock-ribbed and intransigent interpretation that no real "open-ness" is conceded to sinful man for the coming of God in Christ. Man is man and God is God in utter separation one from the other, and for the "divine-human encounter" an act of naked omnipotence is required. Brunner recoils from such an extreme viewpoint but his revulsion is not strong enough to take him out of the Barthian orbit. For all

his good intentions, he actually draws closer to the very position he protests by ascribing to natural man a merely formal imago dei and by conceiving of general revelation in such a way as to take away the possibility of its having any meaningful role as a divinely appointed "catylyst" in the encounter of God with man. The "law of closeness of relation," which Brunner proposes as a counteractive to Barth's "radical fideism," tends in the unfortunate direction of effecting in the end a complete divorce of reason from any possible knowledge of divine truth. Man is thus set in an antithetical relationship to God which militates against the genuineness of that encounter which is so important in all Brunner's theology. Brunner would seem to have become a proponent of the very doctrine which he so strongly disavows -- the doctrine of "a divine monergism, in which nothing of the dialogue-character of our relation to God is left."[1]

P. T. Forsyth, free from the duress of such rigid presuppositions as hamstring the thought of the Swiss theologian, conceives of the relationship between God and man in a much more constructive way. In his thinking the point of contact for the revelation of God as Creator and

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1. The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, p. 177.

Redeemer is man's will and conscience. This is in direct contrast to Brunner who holds that in natural man conscience has "primarily nothing to do with God at all,"[1] and any feeling that one ought to do right is only "a sign that I cannot do it."[2]

Forsyth starts from the conviction "that for life and history the moral is the real, and that the movements of the Great Reality must be morally construed as they are morally revealed."[3] The holy love of God is behind both His activity in creation and His activity in redemption. God ever creates and redeems. Both are continuing functions of the great Moral Reality. His redemption is ever fulfilling His creation and His creation is ever providing for redemption. Here again Forsyth is at variance with Brunner who tends to sub-divide the one God in a mechanical sort of way, (e.g. in the second volume of his Dogmatics), presenting Him first as the God who creates and then as the God who redeems, without sufficiently identifying Creator and Redeemer as one and the same God.

In natural man the point of contact for the moral reality of God as Redeemer is the will and conscience.

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1. Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 156.

2. Ibid., p. 74.

3. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 222f.

This, as has been indicated, is a very important element in Forsyth's principle of the moralizing of dogma.[1] But care must be taken in this conception that morality does not swallow up religion. Such care is very diligently exercised by Forsyth. However, his proper caution does not involve any minimizing of the role of conscience in the redemptive coming of God to man. Further elucidation is needed here to clarify his position and set it in definite contrast to that of Brunner.

While conscience has no power in the best of men to bestow forgiveness, nor can it even bring the assurance of sins forgiven, nevertheless, Forsyth maintains, it will "give us a sound footing up to a point, till it rouse the sense of the holy, and then it creates in us the passion for forgiveness as life's one need."[2] Beyond this point conscience shares the impotence of rational thought in bringing man to a saving knowledge of God in Jesus Christ. In God the Holy Father there is an interesting reference to "the moral soul of the Hebrew race which produced the living conscience of mankind."[3] This must not be in-

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1. See above, pp. 74ff.

2. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority, p. 182. On a later page conscience is designated "the forerunner of the Gospel" (p. 402). In an article on "The Cross as the Final Seat of Authority" in The Contemporary Review October, 1899), Forsyth speaks of the conscience as "the herald of Redemption" (p. 605)

3. Forsyth, God the Holy Father, p. 66.

terpreted to mean that there is no conscience in men who have been isolated from the Judaeo-Christian tradition. To deny that the conscience is universal is to go counter to Forsyth's repeated contention that this is "the region where human unity lies."[1] Every man has a conscience which indeed functions "up to a point, till it rouse the sense of the holy." To say this much is to provide proleptically a corrective to the Barthianism which Forsyth is often said to have anticipated, and from which Emil Brunner, to the regrettable cramping of his own theological thought, could not successfully detach himself. The ethical aspect of the imago dei is surely not completely obliterated if universally there is even the semblance of a conscience to provide a prius for the coming of God to man in redemptive power. It is undoubtedly Forsyth's aim to demonstrate that there is such a prius and to vindicate its existence. While conscience is helplessly guilty, it is not, he maintains, "totally corrupt."[2] Here indeed is the "point of contact", the Anknüpfungspunkt, as Emil Brunner was to call it later.

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1. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority, p. 30. Cf. Forsyth, The Justification of God, p. 20; This Life and the Next, p. 29. In the latter work the reference is to "the tap root of the unity of mankind, which . . . lies in the conscience and its salvation."

2. Ibid., p. 58fn.

Forsyth believes that "contact" is not of itself adequate to describe the impingement of the Divine life upon human life. The urgent human need is for "One who is ethically, spiritually experienced by us as regenerative, and reciprocally met by us in a relation that is more than contact."[1] Groping for a better way to express what he has in mind, the theologian says, "The site of our contract with God . . . is in the conscience."[2] There are more overtones of the personal, the moral, the active and the mutual in "contract" than in "contact" and it is these overtones, not the literal sense of the term, that have interpretative value. The point that Forsyth would stress (with all due respect to Immanuel Kant) is that there is a "word from without" that comes to the impotent and grossly sinful, though not totally corrupt, conscience of mankind. This word is none other than the Word of New Testament doctrine, the constitutive Word on a recognizable moral mission, so that "the conscience owns in a sense of guilt, the approach of the absolute conscience . . . with a sheer regenerating power."[3] Forsyth is thus protected

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1. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority, p. 62.

2. Ibid., p. 411. Italics mine.

3. Ibid., p. 196. Cf. Forsyth, God the Holy Father, p. 96: "O how we need a Lord and Master . . . a Conscience within our conscience, and a heart amidst our heart and its ruin and its resurrection."

against the superficial judgment that he subordinates Revelation to the unredeemed consciences of ordinary men.

To reiterate, the plight of natural man is a moral plight. Although he is not conscious of Moral Reality as revealed in Jesus Christ, he does have a "dull ethic, which takes no measure of either his race's sin or a holy God."[1] He has vivid religious interests in Reality as Provider for his welfare. He is eloquent about words but remains silent about God's holiness and has little or no sense of divine judgment. His ethic "wrestles with many problems between man and man, class and class, nation and nation; but it does not face the moral problem between the guilty soul and God."[2]

Although the will and conscience of natural man are not unrelated to the holy God and His redemptive qualities, they are wrongly related. When natural man experiences communion with God in Christ the holy love of God fulfils the morality of man. His conceptual world is renewed and reshaped by the renewal of man himself. His egocentric predicament is transcended. His religion is no longer oriented around self, it is reoriented toward God. That which was primary, man's self-welfare, becomes secondary;

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1. Forsyth, Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 91.
2. Ibid., p. 24.

that which was secondary, God, becomes primary. Morality manifests a new status in the new relationship of man to God.

Forsyth, in his theological suppositions and methodology, holds that morality is the very nature of things. From this perspective he develops his logical thought. His every reference to morality in his moralizing of dogma is a reference to its status or regulative position. He does not presume to describe its contents or criterion. Man in communion with God in Christ experiences the holy love of God which is the content and criterion of morality. In his system, therefore, "morality is not closed but open." In consequence, as Professor N. H. G. Robinson so perceptively points out, morality thus affords an "illuminable principle" which "does not detract from revelation but provides the means for its exaltation."[1]

As becomes evident in Forsyth's theological writing, his presuppositions and methodology, as opposed to those of Brunner, allow to natural man "a religious a priori" which is "not a passivity but a receptivity, a loyalty, an obedience,"[2] and this constitutes man's true "response" to the redemptive revelation of God in Jesus Christ. Such a

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1. N. H. G. Robinson, Christ and Conscience, p. 142.
2. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority, p. 174.

concession in no way brings into question the universality of sin or its corrupting power and effects. Nor is there any compromising of the "Protestant position" that man's redemption is "wholly and solely of God's grace . . . that it is quite undeserved . . . and on God's side absolutely free."[1] However, since conscience in man is the "point of contact" for the salvation of God in Christ, this saving activity is rightly and meaningfully recognized as something which happens in man's conscious and personal life and in which therefore his response is a necessary element. Hence, the Christology of Forsyth, indeed his whole theology, in contrast to that of Brunner is at once both strongly ethical and evangelical.

In his experience of holy love man at once becomes aware of the person that he really is and of the person that he is yet to become. He is aware of a new status of morality in the very nature of things. In the thought of Forsyth, man is conscious of Moral Reality but does not have full knowledge of this Reality which he experiences. For Moral Reality thus conceived demands wholly, but man responds in freedom. This sounds paradoxical, which indeed it is. Forsyth accepts the truth of paradox as

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1. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority, p. 350.

representing the seeming limit of man's rational powers of thought, yet a limit which should be put under unremitting pressure for extension by those same powers. An "effort to adjust" the great paradoxes which he finds in evangelical theology could, he maintains, "only cease with the paralysis of thought."[1]

Emil Brunner as a representative of what has been often called the "Dialectical School of Theology," makes use of paradox far more than Forsyth, especially in the development of his Christological thought.[2] This language of dialectic contributes to that heavy "air of mystery" which often seems to invest his treatment of themes relating to the person of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, Brunner differs from Forsyth in his attitude toward the chief interpretive instrument of Dialectical Theology. With him paradox is both extensive and intensive. That it is intensive means that paradox embodies, from the rational standpoint, an absolute contradiction. Therefore, in Brunner's view, Forsyth's "effort to adjust" the great antinomies of the Faith would be considered utterly futile. In fact, as he holds, such attempts at paradox-

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1. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 72.

2. Emil Brunner, The Word and the World (London: SCM Press, 1932), p. 6: "Just as Christ could only reveal the glory of God through the form of a servant, so all speech concerning God, if in the sense of this revelation, is necessarily "paradoxical."

solving can be quite wrong as, for instance, when efforts to cope with the paradox of the God-man shift the emphasis from the necessity of making the decision of faith to the necessity of giving an explanation.[1]

Unhappy results also ensue from trying to resolve the numerous paradoxes of Scripture. This invariably ends up in a departure from the Scripture, as is the case with the doctrine of double predestination, which posits "a primal wrath of God," and on the other hand with the "unilateral rational" interpretation of the divine love at the expense of a doctrine of divine judgment.[2] These typical examples of Brunner's thinking on paradox show that he would not be inclined to endorse Forsyth's proposal to resume "the long movement of the Church's thought to pierce and clarify the mystery of godliness in Christ."[3]

As has been said before, Forsyth and Brunner stand shoulder to shoulder in their opposition to Rationalism which, in the realm of theology, ascribes to reason the capability of laying hold upon the most exalted truth. Such an attitude on their part is entirely commendable,

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1. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 344.

2. Brunner, Man In Revolt, p. 453, note 1; Brunner, The Mediator, p. 282, note 1.

3. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 240.

but it is something else again when the objection to Rationalism includes reason itself. Such is certainly not the case with P. T. Forsyth, as has been indicated in the discussion of his concept of paradox. While he affirms the dictum that "the moral -- not the rational -- is the real" this does not imply any disparagement of reason. In faith's response to revelation reason has a place of service, and though it often moves unsurely and is forced to halt before the barrier of the antithetical, nevertheless its effort to transcend that barrier "could only cease with the paralysis of thought."

On the other hand, Brunner's position is not so readily determined. In one place in his writing he contends that the Word of revelation to man in faith "does not ignore the reason, but it passes through the reason."[1] Again, in "Die Frage nach dem Anknüpfungspunkt" he seems to maintain without equivocation that reason is the sine qua non of faith, the organ of revelation.[2] Yet in his law of contiguity or "closeness of relation," by which he defines the limits of reason in areas of mutual concern

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1. Revelation and Reason, p. 413.

2. "Die Frage nach dem 'Anknüpfungspunkt' als Problem der Theologie," op. cit., p. 518. Here Brunner teaches very plainly that the possibility of revelation "lies within Immanence."

with faith, reason is put under increasingly rigorous restraint the closer it comes to the subject of personality. When it is actually contiguous to the "central" subject-matter of God and His relation to His creatures, it is obliged to bow completely out of the epistemological picture in favour of faith. Here, to a degree that Forsyth would never admit, reason loses its competence.

The concept of history which has been shown to underlie Brunner's Christological construction should now be critically examined. Of no concern at all to him is the story-book history of men and societies. He is in fact only interested in history as it relates to the decision of faith in response to special revelation. As he sees it, historical consciousness did not originate with the Greeks but is derived from Biblical thought. This consciousness issues from the Biblical faith in the "once-for-all." Hegel looked upon history as the unfolding of an idea, but history cannot be so understood.[1] St. Augustine, on the other hand, saw time as co-extensive with the world. In the coming of Jesus Christ he recognized an event that is absolutely decisive for all time and for all men.[2] History then, is where God speaks to

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1. Emil Brunner, God and Man, trans. with introduction by David Cairns (London: S C M Press, 1936), p. 52.

2. Emil Brunner, "The Christian Understanding of Time," Scottish Journal of Theology, March, 1951, pp. 1-3.

men in time in the special revelation in Jesus Christ.[1] History is where God encounters man decisively through the living presence of Jesus Christ of historical revelation.[2]

Brunner's use of the word "history" (Geschichte) is not always consistent, however, for in his Philosophy of Religion he distinguishes between "history" (Geschichte) and "primal history" (Urgeschichte). Here he writes: "What the 'historian' sees is never the historical element proper, the vital decision, but only the after-history (Nach-Geschichte) or consequence that more or less approximates decision."[3] The decision is basically a secret which no one can disclose -- for it is known to no one, not even to the autobiographer. In his decision, each person is a riddle, even to himself, since every man wears a mask in taking his part in the masquerade of history and can never remove it. There is a person behind the mask, but sin does not allow the disclosure of the person.

In the thought of Brunner the heart of all history thus becomes the primal history. This history (of which no chronological interpretation is permitted) applies only to men in their response to God's address. This encounter

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1. Brunner, Christianity and Civilisation, p. 40.
2. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 355.
3. Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, p. 121.

can never be given a historical or psychological identification. It can only be believed. History, then, is the area of humanity; it is the perverted image of God. It stands between that which has sense and that which is absurd. In this sin-accursed area there are only individuals; there is no real fellowship and no unity because there is no true encounter. The unity is not historical but belongs to primal history. To the eyes of Christian faith history is an interim kingdom. In Christ can be seen both the sense and the nonsense of history, its created unity and its sinfulness, its relation to God and its distance from God.[1] It is thus evident in the view of Brunner that history is not revelation, but is essentially humanity in need of revelation.[2] "History as such belongs only to the sphere of 'general revelation'."[3] History here is not the encounter, for the encounter takes place behind the mask of history, in the primordial history. Brunner's terminology stands in need of correction at this point, for gnostic connotations attach to the distinction that what is seen is only a mask for what lies behind and under the plane of history.

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1. Brunner, The Philosophy of Religion, p. 127.
2. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 153.
3. Brunner, The Divine Imperative, p. 240.

Apparently Brunner himself realized that he had got into some difficulty here for "history" (Geschichte) becomes more important to him in his later works. In Man In Revolt he writes that for Christian faith decision has fallen in history in Jesus Christ.[1] The encounter does take place on the plane of history and in Jesus Christ it is history. The distinction is no longer between Geschichte and Urgeschichte, but between Geschichte and Heilsgeschichte.[2] This is the line followed in The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption. Eternal Hope even bears the testimony that history is not the line of human reason, but of the revelation of God.[3] Brunner's thought is indeed erratic, but in the main he gives the impression of not taking history seriously enough.

In comparison with the involved and changeful ideas of Brunner, the view of "history" taken by Forsyth is simple and stable. In a noteworthy passage in his Principle of Authority he examines the meaning of Lessing's famous saying: "The accidental truths of history can never become proof for the necessary truths of reason."[4] In his

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1. Brunner, Man In Revolt, pp. 426-427.

2. Ibid., p. 426.

3. Brunner, Eternal Hope, trans. Harold Knight (London: Lutterworth Press, 1954), p. 17.

4. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority, p. 112.

effort to determine the "real meaning" of this saying, purged of its eighteenth-century rationalist associations, Forsyth draws a distinction between "history as a tissue of great ideas and powers (Geschichte) and history as a mass of empirical events (Historie):"[1]

> Historie is history as it may be settled by the methods of historical science, where our results, like those of all science are but relative, and either highly or poorly probable. Geschichte on the other hand is a larger thing, out of which Historie has to sift, but which may embody and convey ideas greater than the critical residum retains power to express.[2]

With these distinctions in mind, Lessing's phrase may be interpreted to mean that the eternal truths of Geschichte are not proved by the detailed facts of Historie. While he acknowledges this to be so, Forsyth nevertheless believes that, as a matter of experience, Historie may "convey" where it does not prove. This is to say that "defective documents may be great sacraments."[3] And here the language of Forsyth becomes quite illuminating with respect to his view of the relation of general revelation to special revelation as opposed to that of Brunner.

It should be pointed out that "sacrament and "sacramental" are favourite terms in Forsyth's theological vocabulary. In his usage they consistently mean that God

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1. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority, p. 112.
2. Ibid., p. 112f.
3. Ibid., p. 114.

uses persons, things, events and interpretations of events as the means for His personal communion with man; He Himself comes to man in and through that which is not Himself.[1] It is this "using"and this "coming" on the part of God that Forsyth describes as sacramental. God's moral and personal presence is always the decisive factor in revelation. Forsyth will have nothing to do with any form of substance-sacramentalism. At the same time he believes that God really does make use of someone or something to convey His eternal truths, to make His presence known. In the case of Historie and Geschichte God uses them both in conjunction for His divine purpose in revelation. Forsyth therefore refuses to discard Historie for the sake of Geschichte, nor will he allow that Geschichte can be ultimately divorced from Historie -- a position quite in contrast to that of Brunner in much of his theological writing. It is difficult for Brunner to give "history," as an element of general revelation, any consistent and genuine "sacramental" significance.

There is substantial agreement between Forsyth and Brunner that the question "which, in its religious form, is the first and last issue of life,"[2] is the question of

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1. P. T. Forsyth, The Church and the Sacraments (London: Independent Press Ltd., 1947), p. 229, et passim.

2. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority, p. 1.

authority. They recognize the fact that the three areas in which Christian thought has tended to locate authority -- Church, Bible and experience -- cannot of themselves be ultimate authority, but can only be channels of such authority. The authority of these channels is measured by the degree to which they serve as conveyers of the final authority.

Specifically, Forsyth holds that ultimate authority is the Gospel. However, this assertion is not properly understood without knowing his definition of the Gospel.[1] It is the immediate presence of the holy God who is active as Redeemer in Jesus Christ. In man's experience of communion with the Redeemer the holy love of God sensitizes his consciousness and will to the note and meaning of this authority. The solution of the question of authority for Christianity "lies in the absolute holy right of the new Creator of Humanity . . . in His personality as effectuated in an act which changed the whole of human relation and destiny."[2] If it merely came home to his consciousness this authority would become effectual for man only by impression, a very limited concept of the redemptive relation of God to man. God, in the life, teachings, death

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1. See above, p. 64.

2. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority, p. 11.

and resurrection of Christ renews the whole life of man which includes his conscience and will. For the realisation of this authority, both the faith of man and the revelation of God are essential.

The Gospel, which is the ultimate authority, is witnessed to in the Scriptures. This means for Forsyth "that in the interpretation of God's act in Christ we have from the Apostles the version authoritative and insuperable."[1] The New Testament in all its breadth and depth is "but apostolic Christianity, i.e. a theological Christianity."[2] To elaborate this statement is to say that

> The New Testament, taken as a whole, is . . . canonical for conscience, sanctity, guilt and grace . . . it is the revelation of revelation . . . [where] we have deposited with us an authentic but indirect interpretation from Christ Himself of the revelation direct in Him, and one final, though germinal and not statutory.[3]

In the light of this interpretation of the New Testament, Forsyth assumes its underlying unity with the revelation of God witnessed to in the Old Testament. Furthermore, in the light of this assumption and of his view of the nature and function of the New Testament, he believes the Bible serves "as the norm of all possible revelation, and

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1. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority, p. 140.
2. Ibidem.
3. Ibid., p. 140f.

the great sacrament of it -- coming in . . . to . . . give us direct contact with Him in a mediate immediacy."[1]

Brunner differs from Forsyth in the conceptual language by which he identifies ultimate authority and describes the relation of the Bible to this authority. For him, ultimate authority is what he terms the "Word of God." By this he means the Person of the Mediator, who stands, a third, "between the soul and God, between humanity and God, between the world and God."[2] There is no way from man and the world to God, but only a way from God to man and the world. It is along that way that God comes by His Word of revelation; comes finally as the Logos who is the personal God.

The Bible is described by Brunner as the "form" of God's revelation of Himself as the Word. The "content", which is the essence of faith, is the holy love (agape) of God revealed in Jesus Christ which is witnessed to in the Scriptures and made effectual in the faith-response and appropriation of man. In the Scriptures the "form" is never detached from the "content." To faith the Scriptures are authoritative in an instrumental way. They contain "that element [Christ, the Word of revelation] before

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1. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority, p. 141.
2. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 30.

which I must bow in the truth, which also itself awakens in me the certainty of truth."[1] Even subjectively, the authority of the Scriptures "is not based upon the Scriptures as such, but upon the encounter of faith with the Christ of Scripture."[2] Faith, as Brunner here uses the term, means that man is convinced in his life, his feeling, and his conscience that Christ is the Truth. In this faith-relation of man to God and of God to man, the Scriptures are authoritative as the norm of all possible revelation.

Critics of a more conservative mind have not hesitated to call attention to the fact that Brunner actually has a great deal of trouble in settling his thought on the nature and authority of the Bible and tends to leave the matter adrift on a sea of uncertainty. His discordant ideas can be abundantly illustrated, but two quotations will serve here as a sufficient example. In The Theology of Crisis Brunner makes the strong declaration: "He who identifies the letters and words of the Scriptures with the word of God has never truly understood the word of God; he does not know what constitutes revelation."[3]

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1. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 110.

2. Ibidem.

3. Emil Brunner, The Theology of Crisis, (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1929), p. 19.

On the other hand, in his Christian Doctrine of God he apparently negates what he has formerly affirmed. He now concedes that human words in humanly constructed sentences are the necessary medium of Divine expression. "Here [in human language] the Word of God is present in the form of revealed human words, not just behind them . . . but in direct identity, in the complete equation of the human word with the "Word of God."[1] H. D. McDonald in his Ideas of Revelation makes the following germane observations:

> Brunner has made the idea of "verbal inspiration" the focus of his ridicule, but when he comes to find some authority for the Scripture, he cannot do so apart from the words. . . . Brunner's difficulty is that he desires to draw a sharp distinction between the Word and the words and yet he cannot maintain it. . . . Appeal is made to the Scripture because it contains, in its words, the revelation of God; on the other hand, no decisive appeal can be made to it just because the revelation of God in the Word is not "connected" with the words of Scripture.[2]

Though he declares flatly in an early chapter of The Divine-

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1. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 22f. Italics mine.

2. H. D. McDonald, Ideas of Revelation (London: Macmillan & Co Ltd, 1959), p. 191. Cf. P. K. Jewett, Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation (London: James Clarke & Co. Ltd., 1954), pp. 127-135, 168-172. These are not, in this instance, the carpings of "hyper-Fundamentalists". McDonald and Jewett have put their fingers on a real weakness in Brunner's theologizing.

Human Encounter that "the source and norm of all Christian theology is the Bible,"[1] after the reader has followed him over a circuitous discussion-route in the later pages of this work and in various passages of Revelation and Reason and Dogmatics I, it becomes almost impossible to tell what Brunner's earlier statement really means.

While Forsyth's writing bears traces of involvement in the same sort of problem,[2] it is a relief to turn to the relative simplicity and straightforwardness -- though some might call it naivete -- of his principle for judging the authority of Scripture:

> The real answer I am giving to the question is that the selective principle is the gospel of grace in Christ crucified. Whatever carries that home, whatever is indispensable for that, is of prime value and obligation.[3]

The application of this standard to the Bible as a whole and in its each and every part is, in the conviction of this theologian of God's grace in Christ, the very "highest criticism" of all.

Apropos of the subject of criticism, Forsyth and Brunner both hold that higher criticism, if it is employed

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1. Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 30.

2. See above, p. 64fn.

3. P. T. Forsyth, "The Grace of the Gospel as the Moral Authority in the Church," The Congregational Year-Book (London: Congregational Union of England and Wales, 1906), p. 64. Italics mine.

by faith, contributes to the fuller understanding and valid interpretation of the "Gospel" (Forsyth's descriptive term) or the "Word" (Brunner's descriptive term) as witnessed to by the Scriptures. Forsyth declares, "It is only the Church that can wield criticism justly. For it is criticism of the record of One who has done thus and thus for my soul, and still more for . . . the Church He created and creates."[1] While Brunner says, "The Church must learn to combine Biblical faith with Biblical criticism, just as she has had to learn that in perceiving the Godhead of Christ, she must not forget His true humanity."[2]

2. The Person of Jesus Christ

i. The Concept of the Deity of Jesus Christ

(1) The Incarnation

Forsyth and Brunner are of one mind in holding that the incarnate Christ is essentially one with God. In their thought, the Deity of Jesus Christ does not mean that this is merely a characteristic which Jesus, a human personality possessed to a greater degree than other human beings. Rigidly ruling out all Socinian estimates of His person, they define His Deity, as Brunner expresses it,

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1. Forsyth, "Revelation and the Person of Christ," Faith and Criticism, p. 138.

2. Brunner, Revelation and Reason, p. 276.

"not merely in the sense of intensification of degree but also in the sense of a new quality"[1] of person or being. He is "the One who proclaims the secret of God, the One who makes known the Will of God, which no man could know apart from this proclamation."[2] Christ is the Word made flesh, "not as a personality in the historical sense, but as the authority, as the most intensely personal Word ["The Gospel" to Forsyth] of God."[3] On his part Forsyth declares, "The last [ultimate] moral reality is a person . . . in action in the world."[4] He then goes on to build upon this foundational statement by saying "therefore, God's way of carrying home His love to the world was by a person and the scale of the world."[5] With this in mind, Forsyth sees the Incarnation as "the union of two moral movements or directions, and not merely of two forces or things; and we have their reconciliation and not merely their confluence, their mutual living involution and not simply their inert conjunction."[6]

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1. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 216. Cf. Forsyth, Missions in State and Church, p. 34: "A Gospel in which Christ differs from men only in degree leaves Him still but a man, and soon ceases to win men or to hold them."

2. Ibidem.

3. Ibid., p. 267.

4. Forsyth, Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 237.

5. Ibidem.

6. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 346.

Brunner also has much to say about "movement" in his discussion of the Incarnation. The most critical distinction to be made in regard to this doctrine is that it is a movement from God towards man rather than a movement of man towards God. Conforming to this distinction, "the central truth of the Christian faith is this: that the eternal Son of God took upon Himself our humanity, not that the man Jesus acquired divinity."[1] While it is true that the Incarnate Christ is known only to redeemed man, this neither means that redeemed man knows Him fully, nor that he knows how the Incarnation took place. However, he can employ his reason to interpret its meaning as it is revealed to him through the holy love of God in the work of the "Incarnate Son," Jesus Christ.

According to the witness of the Scripture, the "incarnation is interpreted to mean that Christ in His divine earthly life was veritably a man in the wholeness of man's being as an embodied and historic person . . . in the sense which the phrase 'became flesh' bears in the first chapter of the Fourth Gospel (John 1:13)."[2] It is undoubtedly the desire and intent of Forsyth and Brunner to remain true to this witness. Perhaps the word

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1. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 316.

2. Herbert H. Farmer, "The Bible: Its Significance and Authority," The Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1952), Vol. I, p. 12.

"inhumanization" or "inhistorization" of the God of Holy Love would more aptly describe the Incarnation in harmony with their views and with New Testament teaching. It is the Forsyth-Brunner consensus, supported by the testimony of Scripture and confirmed in the evangelical experience of believers, that the divine Logos came as Holy Love all the way into earth's milieu, that He came as a personal Being, the Word made flesh, Jesus Christ.

In their attitude toward the controversial doctrine of the Virgin Birth both Forsyth and Brunner reveal respect for the findings of Biblical criticism and then diverge along different lines of reasoning. The former, though not aggressively against the doctrine, finds it lacking in moral appeal and implies that it is not indispensable when judged by essentiality to the all-important work of Jesus Christ. The latter, using the cumbersome biological term of "parthenogenesis" in his discussion, professes in The Mediator his "indifference to this as to all other attempts to explain the miracle of the Incarnation"[1] and proposes to "pass by the doctrine without attacking it."[2] This profession and this proposal to the contrary, it becomes quite plain that Brunner is really dead set against this article of the Church's

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1. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 326. 2. Ibidem.

creed, chiefly because it is, as he understands it, a "biological interpretation of the miracle"[1] of the Incarnation involving "inquisitive biological ideas."[2] Some years afterward, in his Dogmatics, he vigorously disputes the validity of the virgin birth of Christ on several grounds. Here he argues that the birth accounts in Matthew and Luke embrace the error of Arianism in that they teach Jesus Christ as having been created by God in time. Furthermore, he contends, as he did in The Mediator, that the idea is docetic. Christ cannot be a real man without having a human father. Again, picking up the main argument from his earlier work, he reiterates the charge that the Virgin-birth Doctrine was formulated to explain how God could become man and is therefore wrong from the very beginning.

Brunner's attitude toward this ancient doctrine of the Church throws into relief a basic problem in his thought. On the one hand, there can be little doubt that he is just as earnest as Forsyth ever was in wanting to maintain that God in Christ has really entered into human flesh, that there has been a genuine incarnation, and thus his fear of docetism in the Doctrine of the Virgin Birth

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1. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 325.

2. Ibid., p. 326.

is a very real fear. On the other hand, there stands the view that it is a great misunderstanding to hold that the object of faith is an historical fact. He is therefore also afraid that by holding to the "biological" representation of the birth of Jesus His Incarnation will become too involved in the form of history. It is far better to say with the apostles John and Paul simply that "He came" and to make no attempt to explain the nature of His coming. That Jesus Christ was truly man must be maintained, but that one may give physical or biological representation of this fact is to be opposed. Yet the question arises whether it is possible to maintain true manhood for Jesus and at the same time place an interrogation point over the physical and biological aspects of His manhood. There would seem to be justification for Barth's strong protest against Brunner's criticism of the Doctrine of the Virgin Birth.[1] As Barth has pointed out, this problem is one of no small proportions, for Brunner's chief criticism of this doctrine extends itself through other areas of his Christological thought, as will be indicated in the further progress of this chapter.

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1. See above, p. 248fn.

(2) The Relation of Christ to God

It is the belief of Forsyth and Brunner that Jesus Christ and God are one and yet Christ is different from God. In an effort to avoid the error of a docetic view on the one hand and an Adoptionist formulation on the other, they undertake to construct a doctrine of His person which will emphasize both His actual Deity and His actual humanity. To this end they utilize the principle of persons in relation and the categories and concepts of Kenosis, Plerosis, paradox and mystery.

The two theologians agree that faith, in experiencing the love of the holy God revealed in Jesus Christ and the power and authority encountered in Him, becomes aware that He, the incarnate Word, is God as holy Love. They both oppose the concepts that the God-man attained or had bestowed upon Himself the divine nature or quality in some event of His life, e.g. in His baptism or resurrection. Neither of them accepts the view that His person is a mere ghost-like appearance of the Logos. In His person and personality as God-man, Jesus Christ and God are one. This rules out any acceptance of the Arian teaching that Christ was created ex nihilo.

Grounded in their Christological thinking both upon the principle of persons or beings in relation and the concept of God as holy Love, Forsyth and Brunner develop

their interpretation as to the relation of Christ to God. According to Forsyth, the holiness of God means His "wholly otherness" combined with His faithfulness, His judgment combined with His mercy or forgiveness. In the words of Brunner, it is "a two-fold movement of the Divine Will -- at first sight a contradictory movement, namely, a movement of withdrawal and exclusion, and a movement of expansion and inclusion."[1] The holiness of God is ultimate, central and supreme. The outward movement of holiness is love. "You can go behind love to holiness, but behind holiness you cannot go,"[2] for "Holiness is love's end, and it is only because He is holy that His Fatherhood is inexhaustible and our loves endure."[3] In their respective thinking on this theme, Forsyth anticipates and Brunner acknowledges many of Rudolf Otto's findings in The Idea of the Holy.[4]

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1. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 162.

2. Forsyth, God the Holy Father, p. 5. Cf. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 157. While upholding the dominant idea in Barthianism of the sovereignty of God, Brunner is not sure that the closely related idea of the holiness of God "ought not to have come first."

3. Ibid., p. 26.

4. See Gwilym O. Griffith, The Theology of P. T. Forsyth, Chapter 5: "The Category of the Holy - Forsyth and Otto"; also Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 157. Cf. Brunner, The Mediator, pp. 68,69. Brunner quotes approvingly the conclusion of Otto's great work: "We can look beyond the prophet, to one in whom is found the Spirit in all its plenitude, and who at the same time in his

According to Forsyth, through the redemptive work of God in Christ, man is infused with His spirit or holy love and becomes conscious of the paradoxical truth that Christ in His person is God and at the same time different from God. On the one hand he is aware that in the person of the God-man there is "a qualitative difference from any natural human passion or affection in Christ's holy love for the holy God, and in His no less holy, invincible love for an unholy world."[1] On the other hand he becomes conscious that the increate but creaturely Christ, the "eternal person living under the conditions of corporeal personality,"[2] prays to and communes with God the Father. He apprehends the truth that Christ and God are one and yet Christ is different from God. The person and personality of Christ is the embodiment of two movements, namely: the gradual descent of holy love (the oneness of Christ and God) and the gradual ascent of holy love (Christ's difference from God). Both movements are aspects of the moral process, "of the supreme mutual act of love and grace."[3] Christ is both God's deed unto men and the

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person and in his performance is become most completely the object of divination, in whom Holiness is recognized apparent. Such a one is more than Prophet. He is the Son" (p. 69).

1. Griffith, The Theology of P. T. Forsyth, p. 48.

2. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 339.

3. Ibidem.

Bearer of the deed. Within this moral and dynamic frame of reference, Forsyth describes the relation of Christ to God in terms of harmony or congruity of persons or beings. He believes the uniqueness of Christ in relation to God is one of election and not of creation.[1] In other words, while the sonship of man lies in his redemption by God the Father who created him, the "Son-ship of Christ" assumes He was elected from the beginning by God. His election refers to His origin or position and not to His destiny, as is true with reference to man. The divine Jesus is the unique Son of God. He and God are one and, as such, He confronts man as Judge, Redeemer and King.

Emil Brunner contends that in the encounter of faith Christ confronts man as Revealer, Reconciler and Lord. In this encounter man becomes aware that Christ and God are one, a fact which is ultimately a mystery to other than faith. Brunner develops his own view of the oneness of Christ and God in terms of revelation and authority.[2] Christ the Revealer is essentially God, the revealedness or the content of revelation. Unlike the relation of other men to God, one of faith to revelation, the relation

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1. See above, p. 136f.

2. Brunner, The Mediator, pp. 267-275; Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, pp. 334-336.

of Jesus Christ to God has the quality of the revealedness (content of revelation) of God and that of the Revealer (actualization in His person) of revealedness itself. Christ's divine authority as the Revealer is the personal authority of God, the Revealed. However when Brunner proceeds beyond this point and tries to explain by analogy how Christ is one with God and at the same time different from God he runs into difficulty, a matter which should have critical examination.[1]

Man, according to Brunner, has an empirical and observable personality. Man also has an ultimate "Ego", the subject of his being, which is masked by sin and is only uncovered before Christ. Until this event takes place the personal mystery of man's being cannot be known but only believed. So with Jesus Christ, says Brunner. What is observable in Him to eyes other than faith is only His human personality, His difference from God. But in the faith-encounter man has two illuminations. He perceives the mystery of the Person of Christ. He knows that in his own person he is a sinner, and he knows that Christ, not in His personality but in His person which is the subject of His being, is one with God.

Brunner's Person/personality analysis has drawn

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1. See above, pp. 288f.

fire from a number of quarters. D. M. Baillie in God Was in Christ rightly declares that "the transcendental and the empirical ego are not distinct entities at all, but the two sides of the same entity, the ego observed from without as object and the ego lived from within as subject. . . . each is a sheer abstraction when separated from the other, for a man is one ego, not two."[1] Aside from this, the troublesome question arises as to what was going on when Jesus was engaged in prayer to God (as reported over and again in the Gospel story), if God the Son was the sole "subject" in His experience. To which Baillie replies, "To explain this away would be sheer

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1. D. M. Baillie, God Was In Christ (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1948), p. 89. Cf. W. N. Pittenger, The Word Incarnate (Welwyn: James Nisbet & Co., 1959), pp. 112-114. Although he does not specifically mention the Swiss theologian by name, Professor Pittenger undoubtedly has Brunner in mind when he writes, "No one can be a true man if his human experiences are not centered in an ego which, as the psychological centre of those experiences is fully human. It is for this reason that interpretations of Jesus Christ as one in whom God is the sole experiencing centre are not only absurdly untrue to the actual remembered historical picture of our Lord in the Gospels, but also tend to be (and usually are) heretical [i.e. Apollinarian] in terms of classical christological formulation" (p. 114). The same criticism of Brunner is implicit in J. S. Lawton's Conflict in Christology, when he sets down the first postulate for an intelligent study of Jesus Christ as an historic figure: "His person, His personality, must be a psychological unity, like the being of all other men" (p. 23).

docetism."[1] And in a review of The Mediator Professor J. G. Riddell makes the comment:

> The only link between our Lord's humanity and ours appears to be on the superficial historical level which must give place to the deeper penetration of faith. But on this deeper level of "personal mystery" His nature and ours fall apart, not merely because our nature is described as essentially sinful while He is without sin, but because His humanity seems to be secondary, and even formal, always subordinate to His divinity.[2]

Forsyth does not have in mind such a "divided" Person when he describes the relation of Jesus Christ to God as the embodiment of two movements "in the unity of one historic person, to show that, however inadequate earthly personality is to heavenly, they are not incompatible, and are capable of the supreme mutual act of love and grace."[3] This view stands in marked contrast to that represented in Brunner's Person/personality analysis. Forsyth would have said that the analysis was a psychologism.

Actually, Brunner would be more consistent with his central Christological viewpoint if he omitted the explanation by analogy that Christ and God are one and proceeded with his assertion that man, in faith-encounter with Jesus Christ as Revealer, Reconciler and Lord,

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1. Baillie, God Was In Christ, p. 89.

2. J. G. Riddell, "Emil Brunner's 'The Mediator'", The Expository Times (July, 1953), p. 295.

3. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 339.

becomes conscious of the fact which is ultimately a mystery to other than faith. Faith knows Him as the Logos who is co-eternal with the Father and who is the Second Person of the Trinity. In the person and personality of Jesus, man perceives that the God-man is "the Son of the same substance with the Father"[1] and also man. This is to say that Christ as "the Revealer does not stand merely on the same side as God, the revealed, but at the same time he stands 'alongside' Him as the Revealer of that which otherwise is not revealed."[2] This is to be understood in explicit reference to the ontological principle of the love of the holy God and its "existences" as man experiences them in faith-encounter with God and describes them in terms of the doctrine of the Trinity.[3] According to Brunner, the doctrine of the Triune God tells us that "the God who reveals His Nature to us is the Son who reveals the divine Nature, and that they are both the same God and yet distinct, as the Revealer and the Revealed."[4] In this interpretation Brunner detects the decisive truth

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1. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 349. Cf. The Mediator, p. 245. Brunner uses the confessional terminology with the understanding that "substance" be given its original meaning. See above, p. 258, note 2.

2. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 275

3. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, pp. 157-174; 183-199.

4. Ibid., p. 199.

of "the unity of God's Nature and of His Revelation."[1] The how of the paradoxical truth that Christ and God are one and yet different ultimately remains a mystery. It can be known and believed by faith but cannot be explained.

Both Forsyth and Brunner clearly believe that Christ is increate, that the Son is from everlasting to everlasting with the Father. The former uses the referent: "The Pre-existence of Christ;"[2] while the latter uses the referent, "The Eternal Godhead of the Son."[3] It is Forsyth's bedrock conviction that an evangelical Christology must affirm the pre-existence of the Son of God, along with a real incarnation. If the evangelical principles of redemption and the forgiveness of sins through Christ be allowed, then a doctrine of pre-existence inevitably follows. "Nothing lower than the Holy God could re-hallow the guilty human soul."[4] In keeping with his faithful adherence to the presupposition borrowed from Butler that "Morality is the nature of things," Forsyth thinks of all the deeds of Christ on earth as having had "a moral substratum in the act of His premundane personality."[5] This is to say that "they had all a volitional

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1. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 199.
2. See above, p. 100.
3. See above, p. 254.
4. Forsyth, Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 281.
5. Ibid., p. 282.

foundation in the heavens, which, because it was action and not mere substance, did not impair their reality but enhanced it."[1]

There is little to be found in Brunner's treatment of "The eternal Godhead of the Son" in his Dogmatics to compare with Forsyth's intensely earnest writing on this topic. As has been shown, Brunner gives primary attention to the exposure of those fallacies and weaknesses in the estimates of Christ which do not support his eternal Godhead. The most positive statement he makes is the one with which he opens his discussion: "Beginning with the Man Jesus, in the Man Jesus perceiving the Christ and His royal authority, finally through faith we are impelled to believe in Jesus as the Son of God from all eternity."[2] Yet it must be said that while Brunner deals with Christ's pre-existence in a disappointing way in Dogmatics II, a major portion of The Mediator either directly or indirectly supports this doctrine.

Linked with Forsyth's view of the pre-existence of Christ is his concept of the "cosmic" Christ who is everlastingly the Lord of Creation, the Christ through whom

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1. The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 282.

2. The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 340.

all things were made and in whom all things cohere.[1] Forsyth very definitely holds to the Pauline correlation of Creation and Redemption. For him, Christus Creator est Christus Redemptor. Brunner, on the contrary, is indifferent to these ideas. His attitude, as it is reflected in The Mediator, has been criticized by Professor W. N. Pittenger:

> An almost complete lack of interest in any of the cosmological questions which may be raised about the Word of God is evident in Brunner's treatment of the Logos conception. . . . The Word of God as an eternal person in the Godhead is described in traditional language as "the process of self-communication existing eternally in God", but we discover that the self-communication which is predicated of Him, so far as the world is concerned, is largely confined to the "speaking of God's name" to man.[2]

In a later comment Professor Pittenger very truly declares that Brunner "overlooks the emphasis which St. Irenaeus (his favourite patristic writer) gives to the Word as cosmological agent of Deity, the references to that Word's endless activity both in creation and redemption."[3] In the light of these criticisms, which the writer of this

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1. See above, pp. 108ff.

2. Pittenger, The Word Incarnate, p. 135. The writer goes on to complain of Brunner's having "an almost verbal sense of revelation. Presumably all God does is speak."

3. Ibid., p. 144. Professor Pittenger does not find any identity of position at all between the ancient Father and the modern theologian: "Brunner cannot really force St. Irenaeus into his mould" (Ibidem).

thesis finds to be based on solid evidence, it would seem that at this point Forsyth, from the New Testament point of view, has a more "fully orbed" Christology than has Brunner.

To summarize the doctrine of the Deity of Christ in the thought of Forsyth and Brunner as these views have thus far been compared, it should be stated that they both use the principle of persons or beings in relation to formulate this doctrine. Constructing their Christology on this basis, they concur in the assertion that Christ and God are one. However, the two theologians vary in their conceptualization of the unique relation of Jesus Christ to God. Forsyth uses the concepts of congruity, harmony and election in a moral and dynamic frame of reference. Brunner uses the concepts of the Revealer (Jesus Christ) and the Revealed or "Revealedness" (God). The central belief that Christ and God are one is spelled out by the two theologians in terms of the relation of the Son (as person or being) to the holy Father of love (as person or being). The Son is increate and co-eternal with the Father. To Forsyth this is the "pre-existence" of Christ, morally and dynamically conceived; to Brunner it is the "eternal Godhead" of the Son who is of "the same substance with the Father." In Forsyth's thought, as not in Brunner's the creative and redemptive activities of God

are correlated in the pre-existent and "cosmic" Christ. Both thinkers interpret Jesus Christ as the outgoing of the holy love of God, the Love in person and flesh of the holy Father, whose nature is judgment and, at the same time, mercy or forgiveness. With each theologian the Love of holy God is fundamental to the interpretation that Christ and God are one.

Grounded upon the basic concept that God in His very being is holy love, Forsyth and Brunner interpret Christ's difference from God in terms of His incarnation and humiliation. In their interpretation they employ to a greater or lesser degree and each in his own way the concepts and categories of Kenosis, Plerosis, paradox and mystery. By utilizing these interpretive tools, they believe that they can defend the view that Christ and God are one and at the same time stay clear of the pitfall of Docetism. While a rather detailed exposition of the views of Forsyth and Brunner that relate to this particular aspect of their thinking has been given in Chapter Two and Chapter Three, it is impossible to compare their positions without some reiteration of their line of thought. This is especially true in the case of Forsyth. However, the writer will try as much as possible to avoid plowing over already tilled ground.

P. T. Forsyth maintains that the twin notions of

Kenosis and Plerosis are valid concepts for interpreting Christ's difference from God without undermining the belief that He is, at the same time, one with God. At variance with nineteenth-century kenotic theories which taught a renunciation of divine attributes by the Logos, Forsyth conceives of the Kenosis as the operation of these attributes in a new mode of existence.[1] Kenosis does not mean that Jesus divested Himself of the attributes of divine majesty, i.e. omniscience, omnipotence and omnipresence. What it actually means is that they were retracted from full actuality to potentiality in the person of Jesus in whom the Logos became flesh. Forsyth believes that this concept permits neither the destruction of the divine attributes nor their removal from the eternal realm. On the contrary, he believes it provides for meaningful interpretation of the continuing Deity of the incarnate Christ in all His limitation and humiliation. The divine attributes are concentrated in the dimensions of the Logos made flesh, Jesus Christ. Kenosis is the voluntary contraction of consciousness, a limiting of His power by His will.

Basic to Forsyth's use of Kenotic Theory is a doctrine of God which conceives of Him not as static

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1. See above, pp. 114ff.

divine substance or as passive being but as the personal God of moral action whose very nature it is to bestir Himself in holy love on behalf of sinful man. If God's essential being as holy Love is "changeless change," to borrow Forsyth's expression, then a theory of Kenosis can be fruitful in showing that God Himself came to men in the person of Jesus Christ without doing violence to His divine being but rather confirming it.

According to Forsyth, the Kenosis of the incarnate Christ requires His self-fulfilment (Plerosis), or growth,[1] i.e. "a history of moral redintegration, the history of His recovery, by gradual moral conquest, of the mode of being from which, by a tremendous moral act, He came."[2] In other words, "the diminuendo of the Kenosis went on parallel with the crescendo of a vaster Plerosis. He died to live."[3] Forsyth does not attempt to psychologize the process, for he believes such a procedure to be presumptuous and required only by science, not by religious faith. Holding in abeyance critical comment on Plerosis and Kenosis as he understands them, attention will now be

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1. See above, pp. 125ff.

2. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 308.

3. Ibid., p. 311.

given to Brunner's viewpoint, insofar as it relates to these concepts.

It is clearly apparent that in the earlier stages of his Christological construction Emil Brunner had a negative attitude toward Kenoticism. With all the glaring weaknesses of the older theories in mind, his thinking is definitely polemic. He stands in special opposition to those nineteenth century Christologies which were attempts to psychologize the God-man on a kenotic basis.[1] Virtually all that he will concede in a positive way in The Mediator is to say that during His earthly ministry there was an "incognito" which concealed the fully divine nature of Christ and that the "self-emptying" which so characterized His life was evidenced by this disguise. Two years later, in The Theology of Crisis, Brunner simply states that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ necessarily involved a kenosis which gave the Son of God His human disguise:

> The revelation of God can never be a true revelation without being, at the same time, a disguise, a κένωσις. "God incarnate" means that the Mediator, when He appeared in history was true man. The Son of God incognito walked among men. Faith only can pierce the veil.[2]

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1. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 343n and p. 349n.

2. Brunner, The Theology of Crisis, p. 18. Cf. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 431.

In his later writing the Swiss theologian is found to have moved somewhat nearer to a "kenotic" position.[1] In the second volume of his Dogmatics he declares for the following view of Kenosis: "We can and must say, that God, as He confronts us in the man Jesus, and especially as He is manifested to us as the Crucified, has divested Himself of His attributes of majesty."[2] But, it is "obvious that the Kenosis which belongs to the Incarnation constitutes a self-limitation of God, [whose] limits cannot possibly be defined,"[3] and, furthermore, the question of how the divine and human natures can be combined in the Person of Jesus "is utterly beyond the power of human understanding."[4] Even to ask such a question is unwarranted and unbecoming inquisitiveness.

To Brunner the mechanics of Kenosis is indeed little more than a vast mystery. At the same time the

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1. O. C. Quick in his Doctrines of the Creed (London: Nisbet & Co., 1938) makes this comment about Brunner and Kenoticism: "His Christology, like that of others influenced by Kierkegaard, is in a . . . general sense kenotic in that it emphasizes the human limitations of Jesus Christ and attributes them to the descent of the Son of God" (p. 133fn).

2. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 360.

3. Ibidem.

4. Ibid., p. 361.

fact of the self-emptying as declared in the Philippian passage is held to be of the utmost importance:

> In this self-emptying alone . . . does God reveal the unfathomable depths of His love, the infinite desire with which He wills to give Himself to us -- here alone, where He . . . lays aside all His glory. . . . This love of His is . . . simply His unconditioned will to reveal Himself, His Deity, His Divine Nature, and to make it evident to man.[1]

Thus, in the thought of Brunner, the kenosis has supreme declarative value while its usefulness in explicating the Divine-Human relationship is denied. The declarative value inheres in the fact that the outpouring of Himself in love by God in Christ is a means of revealing, and not merely of obscuring, the divine nature. Yet Brunner sees the "obscuring" of kenosis becoming absolute in the event of the Crucifixion. "In His death the Son of God, who comes to us, does not only empty Himself of all His royal and divine attributes, but also of all that could distinguish the one from the other."[2] Here, at the "real meeting-place" between God and man, the faith of man must make a leap into total darkness to lay hold upon the truth that Christ and God are one and, at the same time, that Christ is different from God. For Brunner this is a truth that belongs in the category of paradox and is ultimately

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1. The Mediator, p. 297f.

2. The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 363. Italics mine.

an impenetrable mystery.

The contrast between Forsyth's and Brunner's views of kenosis could be stated as follows: Whereas for the former kenosis is central and paradox is an incident in the articulation of this theme, for the latter mystery or paradox is central and kenosis is merely a flash of light against this dark background.

Since the concepts of Christ's oneness with God and difference from God and His oneness with man and difference from man overlap in the thought of the two theologians, the ideas which have been discussed in this section will be further examined and criticized in the succeeding section on the humanity of Jesus Christ.

ii. The Concept of the Humanity of Jesus Christ.

As has been shown, Forsyth assumes a general agreement among Christians of his day that Jesus Christ was truly a man.[1] In his Theory of Kenosis he hopes to demonstrate that a concept of His true divinity need not be antithetical to that of His true humanity. To substantiate his theory, Forsyth alludes a number of times to the "kenotic" text, Philippians 2:6-8. However, he is more dependent on the tenor of Scripture than the text of

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1. See above, p. 144.

Scripture in developing his ideas of kenosis. For him the kenotic theme is sounded throughout the whole of the New Testament and even proleptically in Isaiah 53. That theme, to him, is that the eternal, glorious and majestic God has entered the earthly milieu "in the form of a servant."

Man, in the faith-experience of personal contact with God in Christ finds the confirmation of the kenotic motif witnessed to in Scripture. The One who does such great things for man's soul can surely be no less than correlative with the Heavenly Father and have eternal existence with Him. If, as Forsyth holds, the Incarnation was the result instead of the cause of the moral action of Christ, "then it was the result . . . of a great and creative moral decision of His before He entered the world -- which preserved His pre-existence, and seems to require some form of kenosis."[1] The only possible alternative to this theory, in Forsyth's judgment, would be a theory of a "progressive deification of man in a rising scale of mutual involution; which requires some form of adoption-ism."[2] But "some form of adoptionism" that structures Christology outside the spacious bounds of the Athanasian Creed is not, in Forsyth's opinion, adequate to bear the weight of Christian Faith. Since, in contrast to Brunner,

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1. The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 232.
2. Ibidem.

Forsyth devotes his attention to the kenotic theory of the Incarnation, it is appropriate to give additional and critical consideration to his concept of kenosis in relation to the Person of Jesus Christ.

The salient feature of P. T. Forsyth's type of kenotic theory is embraced in the descriptive designation: Real but Potential.[1] This means that in the kenosis the attributes of God were not eliminated or destroyed but were reduced and concentrated by an utterly free and self-consistent act of the divine will. This view must be understood in relation to the soteriological principle which demands that "all Christology must rest on a moral salvation, spiritually and personally realized, and any metaphysic involved must be the metaphysic of redemption which is only the superlative of a metaphysic of ethics."[2]

Forsyth maintains that the Incarnation is a brand new act of God's Self-identification with the world. In so doing he escapes difficulties encountered by earlier kenoticists in trying to establish possible grounds for the "enfleshing" of God, e.g. man was created in the image

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1. This designation logically derives from A. B. Bruce's arrangement of types in the Humiliation of Christ. H. R. Mackintosh's type of theory as expressed in The Doctrine of the Person of Jesus Christ (1912), pp. 463-507, is much like that of Forsyth. However, Forsyth as the earlier writer is more creative and original.

2. The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 332.

of God; therefore the Logos can become man, with resulting problems raised of degree and kind of Incarnation. Such problems are circumvented by the perceptive claim that God, who is bound only by His own holiness, who could (if necessary) "raise up children to Abraham" from the very stones, is able to establish a new relationship between Himself and His Creation without resorting to precedent. In this way Christ's uniqueness and conformity can be held together. Christ is truly, yet newly man.

A very significant contribution that Forsyth makes to the progress of Christological thought along kenotic lines has to do with the person of the Incarnate Christ. His type of theory makes it possible to say that the Son, after kenosis, retains His Sonship unimpaired. This is possible, not because of any dualism as devised or intimated by some kenoticists (e.g. Thomasius and Gore), but because Forsyth's modal interpretation permits him to speak of the <u>actual</u> becoming <u>potential</u>. Critically important for the support of this view is Forsyth's belief that the attributes of God are God in His Self-expression; therefore they cannot be detached from His person. We know that "God was in Christ" through our own experience; it follows then that the Divine attributes in their totality must somehow likewise be in Christ. As Forsyth sees it -- and his reasoning is cogent -- the only way

this is possible is for them to be potentially there, accommodated to the new state of Incarnation. In this way he can logically maintain the integrity of the Son throughout the Incarnation without denying His manhood.

P. T. Forsyth does not think more highly of kenotic theory than he ought to think. He wisely recognizes the limits of even the most productive theory in shedding light upon the hidden things of God. Therefore he cannot be charged with engaging in far-out speculation on matters beyond mortal ken. Mystery hovers over the labours of the theologian, and Forsyth is ready to acknowledge this, but he is also committed to the position that as long as the mental faculties of the Christian thinker are in working order, there must be no cessation of effort to pierce the great mysteries of faith. With a boldness which does not characterize the attitude of Emil Brunner, he declares:

> He [God] wills to be inquired of. It is not the questions that are intrusive. We are not called on to sacrifice our intellect, if only we do not idolize it.[1]

Though Forsyth makes valuable contributions to Kenotic Christology, there are weaknesses in his theory which should be pointed out -- weaknesses which the theologian himself would be willing to admit were probably there:

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1. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 284.

> I am aware of the kind of objection raised to the theory. Many difficulties arise readily in one's own mind. It is a choice of difficulties.[1]

First, there would seem to be an ambiguity in Forsyth's treatment of Christ's self-consciousness. On the one hand he supports the view that Christ was conscious of His divine mission and place.

> Christ's sense of finality we must recognise; which is His faith, however implicit, in His own Godhead. We must acknowledge His sense of His own finality in the last moral issue of the world, the supreme human issue, the issue between God and man, life and death. He knew He was decisive in that issue. And who could be final or decisive there but God? . . . Must He not have known Himself for the incarnation of the Eternal saving Will of God, the Eternal agent of the Eternal purpose?[2]

While yearning to give an unequivocal "Yes" to this rhetorical query, the most untutored Christian logician may well hesitate. Forsyth is not permitted to shift the argument from "Christ's sense of finality which is His faith"[3] to His knowing that finality, as though the one

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1. Forsyth, Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 294.

2. Ibid., pp. 92-94.

3. Ibid., p. 92. In October, 1909, when his great Christological work was first coming from the press, Forsyth contributed a scant page-and-a-half article to The Expository Times under the heading "The Faith of Jesus." In his introductory paragraph he expresses some surprise and disappointment over the fact that no theologian of repute, to his best knowledge, had ever written on such a topic. Forsyth himself barely opens a discussion "which seems imperative of the relation between faith in our case and whatever takes its place in the case of Jesus as His relation to God" (p. 8). He then goes on to say that

could be equated with the other. Evidently it is the "knowing" rather than the "sense which is faith" that Forsyth really has in mind, for in a later passage he asks "But if He [God] parted with His self-consciousness as infinite, would it not come as near to suicide as infinite could?"[1] On the other hand, if these points are granted, could Christ truly be called human? Such a self-consciousness would surely refuse licence to the theologian to say that Christ gave up the conditions of God for the conditions of men. Indeed, were it not for His forthrightness in declaring for Christ's full humanity, Forsyth's theory might be considered docetic, as having an Apollinarian taint. There is in his teaching here something of the same danger and difficulty that is encountered in Brunner's Person/personality explication. A tendency can be detected at times in both theologians to regard the presence of God in Christ as a divine manifestation rather than a real Incarnation, though both would have stoutly denied any such intent.

Closely related to the foregoing is Forsyth's

"From Him [Jesus] the expression of sin and of faith are alike absent; where we believe, He knew" (p. 9). Such would seem to be true and yet, faith being the central exercise of our religion, does not such an assertion put Him at one more removal from our humanity?

1. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 295.

endeavour to preserve in Christ both a divine sinlessness and a genuinely human susceptibility to temptation. This problem can be resolved, he feels, by inquiring, "What if His kenosis went so far that though the impossibility [of sinning] was there He did not know of it? The limitation of His knowledge is indubitable -- even about Himself."[1] When this last assertion is set alongside the positive declaration: "For Him God was His self-consciousness,"[2] an inconsistency becomes evident. If, in the reduction of the divine attributes there remains in Christ such an "unreduced" divine self-consciousness as Forsyth here and there ascribes to Him, does it not become implausible to believe that Christ did not know that He could not sin? And is not this implausibility further heightened by the Scriptural witness to the perfect moral and spiritual insight that the Son of God had into the very inner life and thought of men? e.g. "But He knew their thoughts."[3] Could One who knew others so deeply and so truly be rightly held not to know Himself in the same way? If the answer is

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1. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 295.

2. Forsyth, "The Faith of Jesus," The Expository Times (October, 1909), p. 9.

3. Luke 6:8. Cf. W. R. Bowie, Exposition of the Gospel of Luke, The Interpreter's Bible, Vol. 8, p. 112: "The light of the truth of God that was in Him had a penetrating certainty."

"No", Forsyth can be found guilty of undercutting his own argument, and at this point his theory may be said to lack consistency. While his line of reasoning is remarkably ingenious, it is not -- in this area of his thought -- thoroughly convincing.

Again, it must be said that Forsyth's theory is not altogether free from the suggestion of Tritheism. This keen-minded theologian is quite insistent that it was the Son who became man and dwelt among us. "God sent; the Son came."[1] The distinction between Father and Son must not be imperilled. But in the interest of the unity of the Godhead Forsyth qualifies this view. "Christ's emptying of Himself is . . . one of the powers of His Godhead, and not a denial of it. He could not have emptied Himself but for His Godhead."[2] However, it can be argued that the idea of the Godhead as potential in the Incarnation does not entirely satisfy the requirement for unity. To say that one person of the Godhead possesses the God-head in a Self-retracted way while the other two persons possess the Godhead in its fulness puts a strain upon the powers of reason. Indeed, the whole idea of "potentiality" by which Forsyth is forced to become involved in an abstruse

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1. The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 272.
2. The Taste of Death and The Life of Grace, p. 96.

argument is a very elusive concept and one is reminded of the comment made by A. S. Pringle-Pattison: "Potentiality . . . is perhaps the most slippery term in the whole vocabulary of philosophy."[1] Though he shows great originality in introducing the term to the vocabulary of theology, Forsyth cannot entirely control this innate "slipperiness" as he develops his Theory of Kenosis. However, as for complications with the Doctrine of the Trinity, H. R. Mackintosh has made a sage observation: "The doctrine of the Trinity is indeed a comprehensive expression of the new Christian thought of God; but it is reached and controlled by that which we learn from the Incarnation, not assumed as dictating what the Incarnation has to teach us."[2]

Forsyth's concept of the Plerosis as a movement that "went on parallel" with the Kenosis seems more difficult to conceive than the self-limitation of Christ. This may be due to the fact that it is not as easy to throw light upon this movement from the "lamp" of human analogy as could be done, and was done, with much helpfulness in the case of the Kenosis.[3] Or, it may be that the difficulty stems, in part at least, from Forsyth's

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1. A. Seth Pringle-Pattison, The Idea of God (Aberdeen: The University Press, 1917), p. 106.

2. Mackintosh, "The Revival of Kenoticism," The Expository Times (December, 1909), p. 106.

3. See above, pp. 115ff.

lack of discrimination in the use of words and phrases by which he seeks to interpret an unfamiliar concept. "Recovery", "reconquest", "evolution", "regained", "lived it back", "worked out the Salvation He was", "exercised unto godliness", "realised all that was in Him", "emergence of deity", "unfolding of deity" -- all are examples of the variety of ways in which Forsyth wrote about Plerosis.[1] And though he strictly qualifies the use of the term "progressive incarnation" and "speaks carefully" of it, the fact remains that the expression has too many heretical associations to be a felicitous description of what he has in mind.

Regardless of reasons, it is not easy to understand the kind of "growth" that Plerosis embraces. At first Forsyth says, "The history of Christ's growth is . . . a history of moral redintegration, the history of His recovery by gradual moral conquest, of the mode of being from which by a tremendous moral act He came."[2] Later on he must warn, "We shall be most careful to note that any growth in His sense of Godhead was not the growth or acquisition of that Godhead itself."[3] The two statements

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1. The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, pp. 323-357. Cf. J. H. Rogers, The Theology of P. T. Forsyth, p. 263. Rogers complains of Forsyth's being "inconsistent in his terminology," though he does not relate this inconsistency to the discussion of Plerosis.

2. Ibid., p. 308.

3. Ibid., p. 353.

seem to make "growth" an ambiguous concept when applied to Jesus Christ. If Christ's life was a winning back of what was already His, if He became what He already was, if the essence of His Person was His Godhead which by definition cannot grow, then there can be no real growth in Christ and His difference from man is exaggerated by Forsyth. Then it may be argued that the Incarnation was not real; Christ did not really become man but merely cloaked Himself in human form. But Forsyth in his general Christological teaching is against such a view and contends with great earnestness for a genuine Incarnation. He has certainly not intended to weaken this affirmation.

Another objection arises in connection with Forsyth's development of the Plerosis concept. This has to do with his assertion that the Crucifixion is to be regarded not only as the "nadir" of the Kenosis but also as the "zenith" of the Plerosis. This viewpoint is explained of course by Forsyth's dominant soteriological interest. Nevertheless, to posit a plerotic climax in the Cross tends to detract from the glorious significance of the Resurrection and the Ascension, about which he does not have very much to say.

Before returning to the thought of Brunner in this section, it should be emphasized that Forsyth's primary

concern in all of his kenotic theorizing is to glorify God and exalt His holy Name for the divine redemptive grace in Jesus Christ. He had above all things a deep religious interest in the amazing humiliation of the Son of God on man's behalf. He was under thorough conviction that no theory of the Incarnation can be complete which does not take into full account the outpouring, the Self-emptying, the Self-giving of God for man's redemption.

It should also be observed that Forsyth did not construct a closed systematic theory and therefore it is proper that all criticisms should be made within the framework of his theory. On this basis the sharp attack on kenoticism made by D. M. Baillie in God Was In Christ leaves Forsyth virtually unscathed. Dr. Baillie seems strangely unfamiliar with the type of kenotic theory to be found in the pages of The Person and Place of Jesus Christ.[1] Apropos of this fact, Principal Charles S. Duthie, a latter day successor to Peter Taylor Forsyth in the principalship

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1. Baillie, God Was In Christ, pp. 94-98. There is no indication here that he had ever read Forsyth's great work. Cf. Bradley, P. T. Forsyth -- The Man and His Work, p. 201fn: "It is unfortunate that D. M. Baillie in his God Was In Christ, makes no reference to Forsyth, for Baillie never meets the argument for Kenosis as presented by Forsyth." Brown, P. T. Forsyth: Prophet For Today, p. 91fn., says much the same thing. These comments serve to emphasize the strange ignorance of Forsyth that has often prevailed among eminently knowledgeable theologians including, for a large part of his life, Emil Brunner.

of New College (formerly Hackney College), makes some pertinent comments:

> It is a pity that he [Baillie] never refers to P. T. Forsyth's illuminating exposition of the idea. . . . The three critical arguments that he employs to overturn the Kenotic view are not wholly convincing. In his first argument, in which he quotes with approval a passage from William Temple's Christus Veritas, he does not appear to have fully reckoned with Quick's answer to Temple's criticism in Doctrines of the Creed. His second argument attempts to show that a Kenoticist really commits himself to saying that "He who formerly was God changed Himself temporarily into man, or exchanged His divinity for humanity." It is striking, however, that he does not quote any responsible Kenotist as having made a statement to this effect. . . . In the third argument, Dr. Baillie maintains that if the Kenosis is limited to His earthly life, then God was successively God (before His incarnation), man (during His incarnation) and then God again (after His ascension). This leaves no room at all, he continues, for the permanence of the manhood which Christ carries with Him into His ascended life. To this a Kenotic theologian might well answer that he is very much concerned to preserve the permanent humanity of our Lord and that the only satisfactory way of doing this is to show first that He was really man on earth.[1]

In the light of Principal Duthie's summarization it becomes clear that Forsyth's theory of kenosis is largely exempt from the criticism made by Baillie in his profound discussion of the Person of Jesus Christ. Viewed largely, rather than with meticulous concern for details, the Kenosis-Plerosis Theory has much to commend it over any other form of Kenotic Christology.

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1. Charles S. Duthie, God In His World (London: Independent Press, Ltd., 1954), pp. 29-31.

It is also Emil Brunner's express intent to represent Jesus Christ as vere homo as well as vere Deus. Indicative of this is the fact that he initiates his Christological labours under a banner bearing the Irenaean legend: "Jesus Christ, in His infinite love, has become what we are, in order that He may make us entirely what He is."[1] Affixed to the same banner is the corresponding sentiment from Martin Luther: "Nostra assumpsit, ut conferret nobis sua."[2] Thus it is made doubly emphatic that Brunner proposes to present Jesus Christ as "bone of our bone and flesh of our flesh." It is to be expected that he will not be at all disturbed by the very human characteristics of Jesus that are brought out in the Gospel story. In reality, all of this is just as it should be, for the man of Nazareth who was "born of a woman" -- and for Brunner this Pauline phrase means "born just as we are" -- is "man" in every sense of the word, except the sinful sense. He believes that --

> the God, who although he cannot be grasped by the human mind, though He is infinite and self-sufficient, comes down to the level of humanity in the form of a real historical man, in the lowliness of an earthly human existence, and meets those to whom it is given to discover who He is in this form: this is the God of the revelation of Scripture.[3]

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1. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 3.
2. Ibidem.
3. Ibid., p. 329f.

While in The Mediator Brunner gives no endorsement whatsoever to kenotic theory, he does have much to say about the "disguise" or "Incognito" which is the consequence of the "Self-emptying."[1] Indeed the term "Incognito" becomes in his early Christological thought a very important concept which needs to be examined with care. And it does not take long to learn, nor is it a surprise to learn, in this examination that the significance of the Incognito is "concealment." By his human disguise the "God-ness" of the God-man is concealed to eyes other than those of faith. The historical element in Jesus' life is the Incognito of the divine revelation which can be known only by faith. Thus Brunner holds that the revelation in Jesus Christ is indirect, a veiling. Only the indirect communication that is the "Kenosis," the "Incognito," makes possible the free decision of faith. However, to insure that faith is free, and utterly so, Brunner feels under compulsion to make the Incognito, the concealment of Deity, an absolute concept. The Incognito is stark humanity in which no faintest glimmer of divine glory can be detected by the "natural" eye.

At this point in his theologizing, students of

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1. See above, pp. 286ff.

Brunner's Christology raise an alarm.[1] The Swiss theologian seems to be presenting a Jesus who is not Christ and a Christ who is not Jesus. There is in his thought no essential unity between the historical Jesus and the Christ of St. Paul. They relate to each other only in the most tenuous way. With such an insistence upon the indirectness of the divine revelation, with such an emphasis upon the absolute nature of the Incognito, with the Deity of Christ completely hidden behind His humanity, God Himself seems to touch man and the world very lightly indeed in the Incarnation. This has led Professor Pittenger to express the opinion that "Brunner's christological essay has no place for St. Irenaeus' assertion, 'He became entirely what we are in order that He might make us entirely what He is.'"[2] The divine revelation is so exclusively laid in Christ, when Brunner speaks of the "indirect identity" of Jesus with it, that it is hard to determine what the significance of the person of Jesus really is.

Brunner's position here brings to mind again his

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1. See Jewett, Emil Brunner's Concept of Revelation, pp. 27-28. See also G. C. Berkouwer, The Person of Christ (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1954), pp. 329-364. Berkouwer devotes the last chapter of his book to criticism of the concept of the Incognito as developed by Brunner, and also by Karl Barth in an even more extreme form.

2. Pittenger, The Word Incarnate, p. 144.

two statements with respect to the relation of Christian faith and historical fact.[1] On the one hand, he declares that the Christian faith is absolutely interested in an external historical fact. On the other hand, he asserts that it is a great misunderstanding to hold that the object of faith is an historical fact. Actually, Brunner finds it impossible to keep these two statements tied together. Instead, in the fashion so typical of him, his thought sways back and forth between them. This is shown in his use of the terms "Incognito" or "mask" whereby he indicates that the revelation of God in Jesus Christ is not to be sought in the historical appearance, but behind humanity, behind the historical appearance. The Deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ then become very remote from each other.

With respect to the Incognito, it is certainly true, and necessarily so, that there is in human nature a veiling of Deity. John Calvin made proper use of this idea in his Institutes.[2] But this is not the whole truth, as Calvin knew, for the human nature which conceals Deity at the same time discloses it and, in the human sphere and in a human way, brings it to expression. In any case human nature is not an arbitrary or misleading disguise, as Emil Brunner would have it. The Incognito must not be made so

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1. See above, p. 280f.

2. See above, p. 39fn.

absolute as to exclude the vital and valid insight of John 1:14: "We have beheld (in the Word made flesh) His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father."

As was shown in Chapter Three, Brunner makes several statements in his Dogmatics II which -- taken at their face value -- indicate a more positive view of the historic personality of Jesus Christ.[1] However, there is also evidence that the theologian's heart is not altogether in these statements. While the term "Incognito" is dropped, its essential meaning tends to linger on in other phraseology. Brunner here speaks of "kenosis" several times, though he develops no kenotic theory. The concept of the Divine Self-emptying which he barely presents, with much caution and qualification, is in clear contrast to that of P. T. Forsyth. What we see is the old view of the complete abandonment of the attributes of majesty. God in the man Jesus has altogether divested Himself of these attributes. There must be no real sign of Deity in the human Christ that can be recognized by other than faith. Though Brunner maintains that it is useless to speculate on the extent to which God had to "empty Himself" in order to come as the God-man, it becomes obvious that in his mind the kenosis is both extensive and intensive.

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1. See above, pp.284ff.

In his Dogmatics Brunner says of Jesus, "He was born like any one of us -- according to the flesh -- He died too, like any one of us."[1] From the first day of His life to the last the God-man was "human" with a vengeance. But, Brunner also insists that the words of Jesus: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," are words that "express something which is."[2] This assertion, coupled with other statements that have been noted earlier, show that the Swiss theologian does make an effort to relate the "Jesus of history" to the "Christ of faith" in a more definite and meaningful way. It is unfortunate that his deeply engrained apprehensions which surface, for example, in his discussion of the Virgin Birth, tend to make his effort less successful than it might otherwise be.

Mention should be made of Brunner's belief that "it belongs to the very nature of the incarnate Logos, to the very nature of the Son who goes through the world in the form of a servant, that He should subordinate Himself to the Father."[3] The Son of God can really enter the human situation only as one who serves in a subordinate position. Brunner is thus found to side with the early fathers who

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1. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 363.

2. Ibid., p. 336.

3. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 353.

made the "subordination" passages of Scripture refer to the human rather than to the divine nature.

On the other hand, Forsyth sees the subordination of the Son as part and parcel of the cohesiveness of the Trinity. "There is place and order in the Godhead and He [the Son] kept it"[1] in a divinely ideal "family" relationship. Therefore, it can be said that "subordination is not inferiority, and it is Godlike."[2] Forsyth tries to make "subordination" innocuous, and even serviceable to Christological thought, by giving it an appropriate meaning in the family life of the Trinity, and Brunner tries to achieve the same result by using the term to emphasize the true humanity of Jesus. The latter seems to make a stronger case for his way of viewing the matter, since Forsyth appears to know almost too much about the Trinitarian "family."

From Brunner's treatment of the kenosis, by which the Son took the "servant" form, it can readily be seen that if he had ever become familiar with the Kenotic Theory of Forsyth he would have disapproved of it. For him, the reduction of the divine attributes from actuality to potentiality would not have sufficiently "concealed" the Christ of faith behind the Jesus of history. Going

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1. Forsyth, God the Holy Father, p. 42.

2. Ibidem.

hand in hand with this objection would have been the charge that Forsyth's theory was far too "explanatory" of what took place in the Incarnation. It would represent only so much "grist for the mill" of reason to begin grinding out a rationalized view of what is, for Brunner, an opaque paradox and an impenetrable mystery. But his criticism could well redound to Forsyth's praise.

In contrast to much that Brunner has to say, Forsyth holds that in the Jesus of Historie together with the Christ of Geschichte or faith there is the revelation of God, not in one set over against the other, but in the one as permeated by and required by the other. This is to say that Revelation

> is not simply the critical residue of the Synoptics, but their totality -- the whole apostolic burthen of the New Testament, pervading the Synoptics themselves. The only fact ever offered by the Church is the total New Testament fact, where the synoptic figure of the Lord is self-interpreted by the same Lord acting as the Spirit. The New Testament revelation is the person of Christ in its whole and universal action, and not the character of Christ in its biographical aspect.[1]

Forsyth is not afraid of "history" and the "historical," as Brunner seems to be in so much of his Christological writing. Though he is no more tolerant than Brunner of the one-sided viewpoint represented by all the contemporary "Lives of Jesus," he does not propose to err in the

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1. The Principle of Authority, p. 130.

opposite direction. He believes that there are many instances of true faith coming into being by the grace of God from a study of Christ as a figure in history. And he has no qualms about advising seeking souls to turn to the Synoptics and "pore and wait" (which undoubtedly for Forsyth included "thinking" and "reasoning") in the expectation that the Christ of faith will "surprise you from behind with His immortal life."[1]

The position that Forsyth takes up in the end can be set down in one short but pithy sentence: "The great fact is the historic phenomenon, Jesus, plus its 'metahistoric' Word."[2] This is a soundly conceived and well-balanced doctrine of the revelation of God in the person of Jesus Christ. As H. D. McDonald says;

> Forsyth, therefore, so to speak, puts Historie and Geschichte side by side, and maintains that they belong together in the totality of revelation. With the "Barthians" it is otherwise.[3]

Brunner, it should be said, has not disregarded the

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1. Forsyth, God the Holy Father, p. 88.

2. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority, p. 115.

3. McDonald, Theories of Revelation, p. 89. McDonald goes on to castigate Brunner and Barth who "by eliminating the historical Jesus from account . . . can entertain the most radical critical conclusions regarding the records, but they appear to be left with a Christ who remains, only because He has the value of God for man, since He is who He is by the Church's valuation and interpretation of Him" (p. 91).

attacks upon his attitude toward history and the historical with respect to the person of Christ and he seeks to defend himself on two grounds. In the first place, he claims that those who criticise him have in mind his "old" position in The Mediator rather than his "modified" position in the Dogmatics; and, in the second place, he refers to the view expressed in an early article, "Das Einmalige und der Existenzcharakter" (1929), in which he declares forthrightly for the "once-for-all-ness" (Einmaligkeit) of the Christ-Revelation.[1] Brunner seems to feel that his short essay established him for all time "on the side of the angels" in that here he "nailed" securely, so to speak, into the "timber" of history the coming of God in Jesus Christ by his insistence on the unique, i.e. unrepeatable, character of this revelation. He is sure that he cannot be justly charged with any failure to take history seriously as in the case of his fellow Barthians, especially of course Rudolf Bultmann.[2]

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1. Kegley, ed., The Theology of Emil Brunner, pp. 340-345. Brunner makes his double defence in the course of his replies to three critics: Tetsutaro Ariga, Edward A. Dowey, Jr. and Georges Florovsky.

2. In his reflections on "The Contemporary Theological Situation" in the third volume of his Dogmatics, Brunner finds Bultmann guilty of an extreme subjectivism which derives from the fact that he "does not relate faith to the historical Jesus Himself, but only to the believing kerygma about Him" (p. 216). Bultmann's own words (found in the Introduction to Jesus and the Word, p. 8) are quoted

However, the cloud of dubiety that hangs over Brunner's position has not been entirely cleared away by his rebuttal of his critics. It has already been pointed out that the "modification" of the position set forth in the Dogmatics, while significant, does not represent an about-turn from former views. As for the "Einmaligkeit" on which Brunner's thought has a real "fixation," it is indeed a vitally important and evangelical concept. P. T. Forsyth, as has been shown, has more than a little to say about the uniqueness of Christ and His coming to men.[1] But -- Brunner has laid upon "once-for-all-ness" a heavy burden to serve as a sufficient counteractive to so much of his other teaching that gives the divine revelation in

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to show that his belief "that we know practically nothing about the life and personality of Jesus" had disintegrated the Jesus of the Gospels and converted the scholarly German theologian to historical skepticism. Brunner considers his own position to be well removed from one in which "even the forgiveness of sins, that content of the Christian message which is retained in Bultmann's theology, is (as it were) left hanging in the air, since it is not rooted in a real historical event" (p. 217). His own point of view is, he feels, a corrective to that of Karl Barth in whose theology "the question of the historical Jesus is scarcely raised," and also to that of Bultmann who considered only the Christ kerygma valid, not the historical Jesus. The viewpoint to which he refers is dialectically set forth, he affirms, in "Das Einmalige und der Existenzcharakter," namely that: "The historical event of Jesus is unique, first of all in the relative sense of the historian, secondly also in the absolute sense of faith, the eph hapax of apostolic proclamation" (Kegley, ed., The Theology of Emil Brunner, p. 341).

1. See above, pp. 151ff.

in Jesus Christ a very loose connection with history. The basic difficulty encountered in his Christological writing has tended to remain there.

There is nothing in the thought of Emil Brunner that corresponds to the "Plerosis" of the Kenosis-Plerosis Theory. If there had been, it can be conjectured in his favour that he would have coined a sesquipedalian German word meaning "to become un-kenoticised" and would have improved over Forsyth in precision of statement. Be that as it may, he has no idea of any process of "regaining what He was" that went on throughout the life of Jesus Christ. Such an idea cannot possibly be entertained as long as the career of human growth is regarded as the concealment and not the revelation of Deity. This is not to say that Brunner does not believe that Jesus "increased in wisdom and stature and in favour with God and man," or that he rejects the view that Jesus, for all of His true humanity, lived a sinless life of perfect obedience to the Father. Furthermore, that he developed no Plerosis concept does not mean that Brunner proposes to leave the God-man in the depths of His humiliation, His Kenosis or <u>exinanitio</u>. The humiliated servant must be lifted up, and Brunner conceives of this in terms of the traditional view of Christ's "Exaltation" -- but with major alterations.

In his Dogmatics II Brunner declares of the Exaltation of Jesus Christ that it is "the return to the pure transcendence of His pre-historical existence."[1] Where, it may be asked, does this "return" begin? Brunner will accept either the Pauline or the Johannine answer to this question. "For Paul the Exaltation of Jesus is identical with His Resurrection, and the same is true in John: only in John still more plainly than in Paul, resurrection and crucifixion, and thereby crucifixion and exaltation are regarded as a unity."[2] Eventually there seems to be a slight preference for John's viewpoint, and Brunner inquires: "Is not this the deepest meaning of the Johannine mystery, that the Fourth Gospel always speaks of the exaltation in such a way that at the same time it means the exaltation of the Cross?"[3] Thus, where Forsyth has posited the "zenith" of the Plerosis, Brunner finds the ultimate meaning of the Exaltation -- in the Cross.

The discussion of the Resurrection involves, as might be surmised from Brunner's previous trend of thought, a decided lack of interest in the physical and material aspects of the Easter event. There was no bodily rising

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1. The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 374.

2. Ibid., p. 373.

3. Ibid., p. 377.

from the dead on the part of Jesus Christ. Whereas, Forsyth, in his sermon on "The Living Christ" encourages questing souls to "visit His holy sepulchre in Scripture,"[1] Brunner is very non-committal about the Empty Tomb. Unlike Forsyth, Brunner makes Resurrection and Ascension "all of a piece," rejecting the Lucan report of the intervening forty days and dissociating a truth known only to faith from any connection with physical facts. However, these denials do not of themselves constitute a great problem in Brunner's Christology, nor do they mark a sharp contrast between the two theologians. While he does not reject outright a virgin birth and a physical resurrection for Jesus, Forsyth certainly "sits loose" to these doctrines. It is really Brunner's motivation in making his denials that becomes suspect and troublesome. Apparently he has a basic and persistent fear, quite absent from Forsyth's mind, that Christ's involvement with the historical and the material will thereby provide evidence of some kind which will inhibit the free operation of faith in bringing men to acknowledge His Deity. So it comes about that, when Brunner's complicated exposition of the Person of Jesus Christ has been examined with care, his explication stands under the shadow of an interrogation point, i.e.

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1. God the Holy Father, p. 88.

whether the Son of God really entered into the forms of earthly existence, whether He became part of history, or if He stands behind history so that one sees only the "mask."

The difficulties that crop up in Brunner's Christological construction provide a real clue to the problem of revelation and reason in the Divine-human encounter. On the one hand, Brunner sees revelation as merely touching the "fringe" of reason, so that there is a contact of sorts between them; but at the same time one must never concede that the revelation can take on any form of reason. However, he realizes that such a position would be Docetism. Therefore he tries hard to avoid such Docetism by emphasizing again and again the "once-for-all-ness" (Einmaligkeit) of Jesus Christ, so the revelation does take on reasonable form. Yet Brunner fears to go this far, so that at many points he attempts to emphasize the personal to the disparagement of the form. Thus it is that much uncertainty becomes attached to the nature and extent of the contact between revelation and reason.

It is against the background of the foregoing discussion that the "unity" of the "Divine" and the "human" in the Person of Jesus Christ, as this is conceived by Forsyth and Brunner, will be considered. It must be borne in mind that there can be no real unity in the one Person unless there is a basic congeniality between "Divine" and "human."

iii. The Divine-human Person of Jesus Christ

As has been set forth in an earlier chapter, Forsyth believes that it is high time to discard the Chalcedonian definition of the "Two Natures" and replace it with a better formulation.[1] However, the most important points of his position should be restated before the contrasting view of Brunner is given.

Forsyth's objection to Chalcedon begins with the conviction that the categories of the formula are "too elemental and physical."[2] Being so regarded they lead to the erroneous conclusion that the two natures were united into one incarnate Person through a miraculous rather than a moral process; hence, the person of Christ becomes the result of the miraculous union and not its agent.[3] Having diagnosed the problem in this way, Forsyth set himself to seek out and devise a new and more adequate form of theological expression.

The course of Forsyth's labours was largely determined by his belonging to a generation whose thought had been shaped by personalism in philosophy and an increased concern for ethics in religion. If Christianity is to

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1. See above, pp. 85ff.

2. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 223.

3. Ibidem.

appeal in a persuasive way to modern man, it must be articulated in terms of personal ethical experience rather than in the abstract speculative terms of ancient dogma. To this concerned theologian such an undertaking becomes absolutely imperative because of the impossibility of comprehending Christian Faith apart from its central doctrine -- the unique moral experience of the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. Speculative philosophical language is inherently incapable of dealing with this theme in any adequate way.

In Forsyth's estimation, the solution of the problem thus posed lies in going back to long neglected modes of thought found in the Bible. This means a return from the Hellenic to the Hebraic concept of the divine immutability -- the divine changelessness demonstrated, not violated, by "the stability and utter steadfastness of God's righteous, saving purpose."[1] God must be thought of as capable of doing anything that His holy love demands. Grounded in this conviction, Forsyth has no hesitancy in declaring that "Infinitum capax finiti."[2] When God in His divine Self-emptying in Jesus Christ acts in perfect

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1. H. F. Lovell Cocks in a review of "The Person and Place of Jesus Christ," The Expository Times (April, 1953) Vol. 64, p. 198.

2. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 309.

freedom to make forgiveness available to sinful men, acts to redeem, acts to reconcile, acts to save, the holy loving character of the Father is vindicated and the Deity of the Son is certified.

It is inevitable that the type of kenotic theory which he develops should set Forsyth in opposition to the time-honoured concept of the divine immutability. Out of this confrontation emerge many of the constructive thoughts that are given provocative expression in the latter pages of The Person and Place of Jesus Christ. That which is most truly affirmed of God is not that He is simply immutable, but that He is "holy immutable morality"[1] and therefore can do "everything that is prescribed by holy Love;"[2] hence, the Self-retracting act of the Son's will is no negation of the divine nature, "it is the last assertion of His nature as Love . . . [and] it is the freest energy of His whole will."[3] In his conception of

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1. The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 312.

2. Ibid., p. 313.

3. Ibid., p. 314. It is really a slight to Forsyth that R. G. Dawe in his Form of a Servant gives Barth such extravagant credit for original boldness and discernment in his approach to the kenotic motif. Dawe asserts that Barth's fruitful insight in his Commentary on Philippians and in his Church Dogmatics is that God is utterly free to act in whatever way His holy love demands, and this action is the supreme confirmation of His inviolable immutability; that the divine self-emptying is the affirmation of the

the Self-giving of God in Christ as manifesting His "changeless change" in a movement that answers to man's great yearning for deliverance from sin, Forsyth effectively lays the ancient ghost of τρεπτός in his Christological thought.

Complementing the kenotic movement, and the necessary counterbalance of the divine kenosis, is the plerotic or Godward movement in the Person of Christ. This is to say that the Son of God brought with Him in His Incarnation "such a soul as was bound morally . . . to grow, under His life's vocation, to the personality that was the complete and final revelation of God, the agent of man's redemption, and the locus of man's communion with God."[1]

According to Forsyth, there can be no union of God and man in the one person except "in a moral way, by personal action which is moral in its method as well as in its aim."[2] "It is only by the way of moral modulation that the divine Logos could become true man,"[3] and the

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God-ness of God rather than its denial; that God remains absolute and unchangeable in His self-giving in Christ because this act is the highest fulfilment of His will of love for men (pp. 166-175). Such thoughts of course were a part of P. T. Forsyth's Christological reflection long before Karl Barth gave them prolific expression. In comparison with Barth he is "lean to the bone" in his treatment of the same theme, but the marrow of his thought strikingly anticipates both Barth and Brunner.

1. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 341.

2. Ibid., p. 223.

3. Ibidem.

Christian doctrine of incarnation is thereby certified to be unique. This idea has "its origin and seat in the Cross, which is . . . the historic focus of moral mediation."[1] Furthermore, the contingent of the moral action of Christ the incarnate Word was the great and creative moral decision of His before He entered the world of time. Otherwise the union of Deity and humanity in the person of Jesus of Nazareth would have been merely the result of the continuous and ascending moral action in His historic life. In this case, His moral growth would give but growing effect to the indwelling of God in his human person and the absolute union would have to take place in His death in which His perfect Self-sacrifice would be both completion of His personal development and his identification with God. This would mean a progressive incarnation of God and a progressive deification of the human Jesus in a "rising scale of involution," merely another form of adoptionism, to which Forsyth strongly objects.

The way has now been prepared for a climactic and summary statement with respect to the Person of the God-man:

> What we have in Christ, therefore, is more than the co-existence of two natures, or even their interpenetration. We have within this single increate person the mutual involution of the two personal acts or movements supreme in spiritual

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1. The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 223.

> being, the one distinctive of man, the other distinctive of God . . . [these] movements, . . . redemption and religion, are revealed as being so personal that they can take harmonious, complete, and final effect within one historic person, increate but corporeal.[1]

Such is the summing up of Forsyth's substitute for the Two-nature Doctrine of Chalcedon. The unity and identity of the person of Christ is not to be found in the juxtaposition of two static natures, but in the moral and dynamic interplay of two personal activities -- the "mutual involution" of the movement of God to man and of man to God. But before any critical comment is ventured on what Forsyth offers in place of the Chalcedonian formula, Emil Brunner's treatment of the Doctrine of the Two Natures will be reviewed.

In an article in The Expository Times on representatives of the Barthian school of theology, Canon J. K. Mozley, with a contrasting attitude of P. T. Forsyth in mind, once observed of Emil Brunner:

> He is not embarrassed, as some eminent British theologians have been, by the "Two Natures" phraseology. He rightly emphasizes the fact that in the language about "substance" and "nature" nothing physical in the modern sense was implied.[2]

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1. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 344. Forsyth then states the advantages of this view: "We seem . . . to have something that comes nearer to our experience, something we can verify, and something, moreover, that is of more religious value to us, than if we speak too much about a conjunction of natures."

2. J. K. Mozley, "Emil Brunner," The Expository Times (September, 1932), p. 537.

This was written in 1932 and was based on evidence found in The Mediator. However, a score of years later in his Dogmatics, Brunner shows more concern over the "phraseology" of Chalcedon, and now he says:

> As soon as the idea of "Nature" emerges in theology we have occasion to be disturbed. . . . For us . . . indeed the ancient idea of "Nature" has become almost hopelessly "naturalized."[1]

"Nature" unfortunately took on an altered meaning somewhere during the time of the later Renaissance and Brunner is willing to admit that this presents a problem, though not the greatest one. "Quite apart from this change in language and its use . . . we cannot view the application of such an abstract philosophical idea to theology without considerable misgiving."[2] This "misgiving" is sufficient to launch Brunner into a long and passionate argument of the same type that he uses against the Doctrine of the Virgin Birth. "Just as all speculation about the way in which the Incarnation came to be is fruitless, -- and therefore dangerous -- so also is it fruitless to speculate about the 'Two Natures.'"[3]

A very big question arises in connection with the affirmation that Jesus Christ was vere Deus and vere homo

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1. The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 358.

2. Ibidem.

3. Ibid., p. 359.

at one and the same time, a question that never seems to have entered the heads of the early Fathers. Brunner phrases this question in three forms, two of them rhetorical:

> Is it possible to throw light on the mystery of the unity of both statements by an effort of thought? Must not every attempt to define the "togetherness" of divinity and humanity in the Person of Jesus break down? Is it not a fact, that all such attempts, of whatever kind, are disastrous, because they inevitably lead man to go further than is allowable in trying to transcend the limitations of human thought?[1]

The answer that is expected here is quite obvious. There was really no choice at Chalcedon but to set "two irreconcilable contradictions side by side."[2]

Does Brunner have anything to offer then in place of the Two-nature concept? If so, it is certainly not Forsyth's notion of "the mutual involution of two personal movements." This would be a laboured effort of foolishly trying to explain the ultimately unexplainable. Brunner prefers to say that in "the absolutely unthinkable paradox of the divine humanity"[3] is represented the self-movement of God to man. He <u>does agree</u> with Forsyth that "this Person is not static but dynamic . . . His 'being' coincides

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1. Brunner, <u>The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption</u>, p. 358.

2. Ibidem.

3. Brunner, <u>The Mediator</u>, p. 493.

with His . . . action."[1] Taken as it stands, the Doctrine of the Two Natures means simply that "the Eternal Word has come." In the component parts of this simple statement the profound duality of the Person of Jesus Christ is expressed. On the one hand, "the humanity of the Son of God means that He has really come, it means the contingency, the uniqueness of the revelation."[2] On the other hand, "the divinity of the Son of Man means the eternity of the Word, the personal Presence of the Eternal God in Him."[3] Consistent with Barthian theological presuppositions, Brunner concludes that the how of the unity of the vere Deus and the vere homo in the one Person "is utterly beyond the power of human understanding, and it is also beyond all that really concerns faith."[4] It is in words such as these that Brunner might have rebuked Forsyth, if he had ever become acquainted with the Kenosis-Plerosis Theory.

While any resemblance to Forsyth's theory is very faint indeed, Brunner does offer a simple and descriptive, not explanatory, illustration of the "coming" and the

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1. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 493.

2. Ibidem.

3. Ibidem.

4. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 361.

"returning" of God in Christ.[1] The basis of his description is the passage in Philippians, so familiar to both theologians. Principal Charles Duthie tells how the parabolic movement in Brunner's exposition in The Mediator relates to human understanding of the God-man:

> In order to understand this divine-human Jesus who comes to us from the heart of ultimate God, we must consider His life and ministry in its wholeness. Emil Brunner has provided us with a useful illustration in the parabola. What he calls the "self-movement" of God in Jesus begins in heaven, descends through the Incarnation into the life of Jesus, reaches its nadir in the Cross, and climbs back again into heaven through the Resurrection and the Ascension. This whole movement is a movement of God and a movement of God's continuous Self-giving.[2]

However, aside from being a double movement of God in Christ, the divine activity described by Brunner has no real similarity to the kenotic-plerotic movement of Forsyth's theory and it does nothing to illuminate the relationship of the Divine and human in the one Person.

The same negative results ensue from Brunner's restricted use of the kenosis concept in his Dogmatics. On the one hand, kenosis means a divine self-limitation that still makes it possible to speak of Jesus as Divine. On the other hand, kenosis means a divine self-limitation that makes it possible to speak of Jesus as a true man.

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1. Brunner, The Mediator, pp. 561-563.
2. Duthie, God In His World, p. 28

According to Brunner, this self-emptying is the supreme paradox of the Christian faith. For the extreme manifestation of human weakness and frailty in Jesus' death on the Cross is also the supreme revelation of His God-ness. How this can be true is entirely beyond any rational interpretation or human understanding. Thus it can be seen that whereas Forsyth "adjusts" the paradox which comes so sharply into focus at Calvary by conceiving this point in Christ's career as the climax of the kenotic-plerotic movement, thereby affirming the unity of Divinity and humanity, Brunner can only see in the "extremes" of the Cross the ultimate paradoxical truth that Christ is both God and man in an utterly unexplainable and incomprehensible relationship. In other words, whereas Forsyth holds to kenosis to avoid the problem and difficulty of the Two-nature bypath laid out at Chalcedon, Brunner holds to kenosis alongside that bypath with all of its unrelieved mystery.

In the thought of Emil Brunner it is through the redemptive work of Christ that faith in encounter grasps His Deity and humanity as modes of God as Agape, the very principle which constitutes and determines the human and Divine qualities of the one Person, Jesus Christ. In terms of this moral principle, the man Jesus is co-eternal with the Father. Faith grasps that "it has pleased God to identify Himself with a localized finite entity, with the historical

person, Jesus of Nazareth,"[1] the One who is *vere Deus* and *vere homo*. If He were only Divine, He would be a powerless Impersonal Idea apart from human persons and God as being. If He were only human, He would be corrupted by sin and could not be free to reveal God (who is not subject to sin) and reconcile man to God. Therefore faith affirms that He is true God and true man. Beyond this truth the union of the Divine and human in Christ is mystery, and its elements of paradox cannot be reconciled within the confines of rational understanding. Thus it becomes apparent that while Brunner's Christological thought is truly "orthodox" it fails to provide any help in resolving the problem presented by the doctrine of the Two Natures.

Yet to affirm Brunner's failure at the point of the Two-nature difficulty is not to claim unqualified success for Forsyth. The latter's notion of the union of the Divine and the human as "the mutual involution of two personal movements" has not had uncritical acceptance. Sixty years ago C. W. Hodge of Princeton Theological Seminary, in a review of *The Person and Place of Jesus Christ*, made the comment, "This combination, it seems to me, is far more difficult to understand than the union of

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1. Brunner, *The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption*, p. 362.

two natures in one person."[1] And in 1952 W. L. Bradley argued that the Kenosis-Plerosis doctrine "has little to commend it over the two-nature theory, since it seems as abstract and impersonal as the other."[2] However, against all objections that he does not make it clear how two personal actions in integrative relationship can constitute another person, Forsyth can be defended to some extent at least by saying that he knew full well the limitations of his proposal and was only hoping to be suggestive where it was impossible to explicate. Furthermore, the effort of this earnest theologian to cope in some intelligible way with the long-standing problem of the Two Natures deserves the most careful consideration before any rejection is made on the questionable ground that it is as "abstract and impersonal" as the ancient formula.

3. The Work of Jesus Christ

The work of Jesus Christ in the thought of Forsyth and Brunner has been dealt with in some detail in the latter pages of Chapter Two and Chapter Three of this

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1. C. W. Hodge, Book Review of The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, by P. T. Forsyth, The Princeton Theological Review, Vol. VIII (October, 1910), p. 692.

2. Bradley, P. T. Forsyth - The Man and His Work, p. 210.

dissertation. It is the hope of the writer that this has been done with sufficient clarity to make it unnecessary to re-examine the respective points of view to any great extent in the course of making a comparison. This hope is strengthened by the fact that there are not as many angles to be reckoned with or complicated concepts and categories to be interpreted in the case of the "Work" as there were in the matter of the "Person." Forsyth's and Brunner's teaching can thus be reviewed and criticized much more briefly in this section. The primary aim will be to present comparatively and critically only those views which are considered requisite to an understanding of the thesis of both theologians that the work of Christ is the clue to His person. Furthermore, before dealing with the reconciliation and redemption accomplished by the Saviour of men, two aspects of the doctrine of God and the doctrine of man which, as has been indicated, are fundamental to Forsyth's and Brunner's soteriology will be considered in a summary way.

i. The Holiness of God

One of the main emphases in the Barthian, Dialectical or Neo-orthodox Theology of the past half-century has been the transcendence of God. Forsyth anticipated this emphasis, which was later to appear so prominently in

the writings of Barth and Brunner, in the stress he placed upon God's holiness. He even goes so far as to say, "Everything begins and ends in our Christian theology with the holiness of God."[1] It is clear that he and Brunner both start their labours with the major premise of the majestic and holy God. This holiness is the absolute, unconditional and exclusive aspect of the Divine nature. It is that which sets Him apart from humanity and the whole realm of the temporal and material, that which makes manifest the qualitative difference between God and man.

Neither Forsyth nor Brunner conceives of this holiness as a static or quiescent attribute of Deity. According to Forsyth, holiness as redemption "speaks in the overflow,"[2] and Brunner posits in holiness "the Will to include."[3] In other words, holiness is active, or, as it might be said, "God acting."

In the thought of both theologians Love as Agape is vitally identified with the Divine holiness. This is not a "sentimental" Love, but a Love that indicates how seriously God takes Himself and man. It is never in anthesis to God's wrath and anger. Rather it is a holy Love

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1. Forsyth, The Work of Christ, p. 78.

2. Forsyth, Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, p. 145.

3. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of God, p. 163.

that must judge with a "thoroughgoing judgment" (Forsyth), a Love that "breaks through" the wrath of God (Brunner). Holy Love is God's will for restored relationship with man translated into judging and saving action in Jesus Christ.

At this point notice must be taken of certain criticism that has been directed at Forsyth. J. M. Shaw writing in Theology Today has claimed to find in his theology a contrast, which is "almost a dualism, drawn between the 'holiness' and the 'love' of God, which does less than justice to the Scriptural representation."[1] However, to this writer it seems difficult to believe that anyone who has thoroughly read Forsyth could come to such a conclusion. The expression "holy love" occurs over and over again in his books and articles, and even when they are found singly there is usually a plain indication that "holy" and "love" belong together. The ideas embodied in each word are shown to have a necessary, close and harmonious relationship. "If holiness do not go out to sanctify . . . all things, if it do not give itself in love, it is less than holy."[2] Indeed Forsyth seems to take special pains to show that there is no tension or separation between God's

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1. J. M. Shaw, "The Theology of P. T. Forsyth," Theology Today (October, 1946), p. 369.

2. Forsyth, This Life and the Next, p. 33.

holiness and His love. Shaw's criticism is not based on substantial evidence.[1]

ii. The Sinfulness of Man

It is the joint conviction of Forsyth and Brunner that man is a desperately sinful creature, standing in guilt before holy God. Guilt is the term preferred by both thinkers to indicate the personal implications of man's sinfulness. Sin is utterly divisive in the relationship between man and God. Forsyth says that man's sin sets him in "sullen severance" from holy God, while Brunner describes man as "in revolt" against sovereign and majestic God. In the thinking of both men sin and guilt are universal, for sin has vitiated "the whole race in its moral aspect and reliability."[2] While there is much agreement between them as to the nature of sin and its consequences, Forsyth's and Brunner's views do not coincide all the way. In fact, some important differences emerge from their discussion of man as a sinner, and these differences should be considered.

According to Brunner, the question of questions that

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1. J. H. Rogers in The Theology of P. T. Forsyth might be thought of as refuting Shaw when he interprets Forsyth's emphasis on the judgment of God as "good news" for the sinner rather than bad. "The good news of judgment is that God has chosen to destroy sin and hallow His name in such a way that man is re-established in communion with Him" (p. 48).

2. Forsyth, The Principle of Authority, p. 404.

arises about man is, "Who is this being?"[1] When the answer is given that man is a sinner before holy God who wills to restore communion with the creature of His love, the problem of the great hindering obstacle to such communion must be grappled with in a serious way. This problem receives close attention in Brunner's Christological writing. In the pages of The Mediator he makes a rather shocking statement about man as a sinner: "We are sinners because we are human beings; the idea of a sinless historical human life is from the human point of view an impossible idea."[2] This assertion has elicited the critical comment from D. M. Baillie: "It is highly heretical to teach that man is essentially sinful."[3]

The idea that the humanity of man is inherently sinful is indeed a reprehensible way of thinking, and it is surely no longer in Brunner's mind when he writes "Nature and Grace" and seeks to make a distinction between the formal and the material Image of God in man. If man is

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1. Brunner, Man in Revolt, p. 18.

2. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 320f.

3. Baillie, God Was In Christ, p. 90. This view has a very direct bearing on Christology and in a footnote Baillie inquires: "How does Brunner reconcile this with his belief that Jesus lived a sinless life on earth?" The answer can only be that Brunner does not, because he cannot. This is just another example of the inconsistencies that come to light here and there in his writing.

essentially sinful there cannot be a "formal" Image (that which distinguishes man from beast) untouched by sin, and all possibility of establishing the fact that man is a responsive, responsible being before holy God is taken away.

Quite apart from this singular instance of what may have been an unintentional "slip" in Brunner's theologizing, when the dust has settled from his heated controversy with Karl Barth, it is still not clear that there is in man the sinner any meaningful "point of contact" for the downcoming Agape of God in Christ Jesus. The validity of the sovereign principle of "Truth as Encounter" comes into question when man is regarded as so affected by sin in the core of his being that all mutuality in the encounter is taken away. For, as Forsyth has said, the act of redemptive revelation whereby sinful man in faith comes to know God as holy saving love is "not a simple act but an act of mutuality. Its sphere is the world of . . . moral and concrete experience."[1]

Forsyth believes that sin, though a great and grievous factor in the life of man, does not totally corrupt his nature and reduce him to a "blank page" as the contact for the redemptive revelation of holy God

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1. Forsyth, "Revelation and the Person of Christ," Faith and Criticism, p. 104.

in Jesus Christ. As has been shown, man's conscience -- "more dead than alive" but still alive -- is the locus where Christ graciously meets man as the "Conscience of the conscience." In this "point of contact" there is more of a personal, a moral and a mutual encounter of God and man in faith than there can possibly be in the Anknüpfungspunkt of Emil Brunner.

In a view that puts him much closer to Brunner than to Barth, Forsyth holds that there is a general revelation in Nature, and that the Christian (but only the Christian) can see God "as the indwelling ground, thought and speech of Nature."[1] The Jew of the Old Testament truly believed that God gave revelation but he never came to the realisation that God was revelation.

> He knew God spoke from time to time, but he did not know that God was ever speaking, and must ever speak -- that the world is his self-utterance, that He is an open-hearted God, that self-revelation is His very nature, and that the whole frame of the world and the soul is tingling with His self-manifestation. . . . The Jew did not realise, as Christ has taught us to realise, the "openness" there is about God.[2]

And yet Nature is totally deficient as a "saving" revelation of God. There is no moral power in Nature to redeem the soul of sinful man from death. This is what Forsyth

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1. Forsyth, Religion In Recent Art, p. 143.

2. Ibidem.

has in mind when he later writes in a manner which might seem to contradict what he has previously affirmed:

> If we will use the words carefully, there is no revelation in Nature. There can be none, because there is no forgiveness. . . . For conscience, stricken or strong, she has no word. Therefore she has no revelation. . . . Christ is the only luminous smile upon the dark face of the world.[1]

The point has been made. With Forsyth no less than with Brunner there can be no "Natural Theology" that offers a way of salvation to man as a sinner before holy God. Man's salvation can only come through a Christ greatly conceived as the very power and presence of God Himself in gracious moral action in an otherwise hopeless human situation.

iii. The Atoning Cross

It can be heartily asserted that the Cross looms large upon the horizon of Forsyth-Brunner reflections upon the Work of Christ. Forsyth uses the word "Cross" so much in his books and articles that he has sometimes been charged with obscuring Christ by the "machinery of the Atonement."[2] As for Brunner, while it is true that he does not weave the pattern of the Cross into all of his writings as Forsyth so nearly does, he definitely wants to

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1. Forsyth, "Revelation and the Person of Christ," Faith and Criticism, p. 100.

2. Griffith, The Theology of P. T. Forsyth, p. 94.

be accounted a "theologian of the Cross," along with Luther and Calvin.[1]

The crucifixion of Christ is the central fact of human history, yet in the thought of both Forsyth and Brunner the real significance of the atoning Cross is "superhistoric."[2] The understanding of the Bible and the understanding of the teachings and life and person of Christ are attendant upon the understanding of the Cross. Jesus who was crucified is a historic personality, but in the relevance of His Person to our faith He is also "superhistoric." Paul verbally explicates that which was enacted on the Cross of Christ. In the Cross -- and in the Cross alone -- is there a clear disclosure of both the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. At the same time the Cross reveals that God in infinite and holy Love, and at great cost to Himself, has graciously acted on behalf of man the sinner.

Forsyth and Brunner are "neo-orthodox" in their interpretation of the Atonement. That is to say they follow the main line of Reformation teaching but with certain variations, deletions, and changes of emphasis. Though Forsyth does some quibbling and qualifying in his

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1. The Mediator, pp. 435ff.

1. The Cruciality of the Cross, p. 17. Cf. B., The Mediator, p. 504.

use of the terms "penal" and "substitute," his ultimate conclusions in the matter support the opinion that both he and Brunner, broadly speaking, hold to a substitutionary and Reformed view of the Atonement. This view is entirely "objective" in that it is "God Himself who reconciles Himself"[1] (Forsyth); in that "God Himself provides the sacrifice"[2] (Brunner).

Forsyth works out his theory within the framework of the threefold aspects of the Cross: the triumphant aspect has to do with Christ's conquest of the powers of darkness by His complete obedience in life and death; the satisfactionary aspect is the satisfaction, expiation, or atonement made by Christ to the Holiness of God; the regenerative aspect is the sanctifying or new-creative influence on the soul of man.[3]

Brunner has a parallel scheme that he presents in association with the Reformed doctrine of the threefold office of Christ: Christ as Prophet makes from the Cross, as the climax of His teaching and the authentication of His Divine-human personality, His highest revelation; Christ as Priest, as the culmination of a life of self-

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1. Forsyth, The Work of Christ, p. 92.
2. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 482.
3. See above, pp. 183ff.

giving for sinful humanity, gives Himself on the Cross; Christ as King triumphs on the Cross and establishes the Kingdom of God wherein "liberated" man may live in obedience to the Will of Holy God.[1]

In these tripartite arrangements Forsyth gives much the greater emphasis to the satisfactionary aspect of the Cross while Brunner concentrates on the priestly work of Christ. In this respect their primary interest and concern are seen to coincide. The stress that Forsyth places upon the satisfactionary and substitutionary work of Christ as "Mediator"[2] anticipates Brunner in a striking way in view of the fact that some years later the Swiss theologian was to gather his Christological thoughts into a massive tome under this very title -- The Mediator (Der Mittler). In this volume Brunner shows deep appreciation for the Anselmic theory of satisfaction.[3]

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1. See above, pp. 318ff.

2. Forsyth, The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 12; God the Holy Father, p. 94; Positive Preaching and the Modern Mind, pp. 172ff. See also Forsyth, "Revelation and the Person of Christ," p. 113; "The Reality of Grace," The Hibbert Journal, July 1906, p. 832.

3. R. S. Franks in his book, The Atonement, makes the pertinent comment: "It may be observed incidentally that there is the most curious irony in Brunner's praise of Anselm. The rationality that Anselm valued in his theory of satisfaction is what the Barthians most hate. . . . . Brunner accepts what Anselm meant as a rational doctrine of the Incarnation, not because it is rational (God forbid!), but because St. Paul said something like it, and the

The Christus Victor element is found in the theories of both Forsyth and Brunner -- more pronouncedly in the former than in the latter.[1] Likewise, the conquest of evil is not a hollow victory that results merely in the suppression of Satanic powers and a resultant condition of no-sin. The man of faith is freed into a larger life and a new obedient heart is created in him. There is absolutely no "moral influence" of the Pattern Man involved in this change in human life. Forsyth and Brunner are both inflexible in their opposition to a "subjective" view of the Atonement. The recreating work of Christ takes place within the man of faith who is brought within the Christ of God who atoned for man on the Cross. There can be no re-creation without atonement.

Forsyth and Brunner alike feel that the Cross was the work of that perfect God who on that historic tree, sacrificed His Son, revealing to faith His boundless love -- a love which judged a sinless Individual for sinful man. Such is the supreme love of a supreme God. In contrast to this holy sovereign God as seen by faith in the Cross stands man in his imperfection, now having a sense of the

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inspiration of St. Paul's epistles settles all controversies" (p. 20f).

1. See above, p. 331f.

chasm between himself and Divinity; which in turn forces man into a crisis, confers dignity upon his life, and supplies the dynamic to banish moral confusion.

While building upon the juristic aspects of the Atonement in Reformation theology Forsyth and Brunner would go beyond the Reformers in expressing their conceptions in more personal terms. Forsyth is anticipating Brunner in this matter when he maintains that, "the ultimate, the fundamental judgment is an adjustment between persons -- God's and man's."[1] Both theologians ground their development of the doctrine of the work of Christ upon the principle of the relationship of beings or persons -- God, Christ, and man in relation to one another. God, the Creator and Redeemer, is the being who creates and redeems human persons through the work of the Divine-human person, Jesus Christ. Within the framework of this principle there is an objective aspect (the agape activity of the holy God in Christ) and a subjective aspect (man's reception and appropriation in faith of the agape activity of God in Christ) to the work of Christ. Through the work of the Divine-human man, a new relationship is established between God and man; reconciliation or atonement takes place. God performs His redemptive work in Christ.

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1. The Justification of God, p. 180

As has been previously set forth, it is Brunner's intent to achieve a "balanced" doctrine of the Atonement.[1] This means a theory of the atoning work in which the two aspects have their proportionate and necessary place. "We are not dealing with a purely subjective or a purely objective process but with an Event which is both objective and subjective at the same time, a truth of 'encounter'."[2] Brunner sincerely wants to keep away from the "completely objectivistic conception of the sola gratia principle"[3] found in the teaching of Karl Barth who "regards interest in the believing subject as mere pietistic subjectivism."[4] As a corrective for this view and in order to construct a balanced doctrine Brunner must place a corresponding emphasis on the sola fide principle, which he essays to do.

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1. See above, pp. 336ff.

2. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 290.

3. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of the Church, Faith and the Consummation, p. 213.

4. Ibidem. Brunner is as eager to avoid the extreme objectivism of Barth with respect to the "believing subject" as he is to escape the extreme subjectivism of Bultmann with respect to the historical Jesus. He is convinced that in both instances his own view is superior: "Thus we transcend the one-sidedness of objectivism which does indeed confess sola gratia, but does not really confess sola fide, and also the one-sidedness of subjectivism, according to which faith is not concerned with the Jesus Christ of history, but only with the kerygma about Jesus Christ" (p. 224).

However, his own deep commitment to sola gratia and sola fide, interpreted in a too inflexible way, makes it impossible to show to any degree of intelligibility how the two aspects of the saving revelation of God in Jesus Christ operate in a balanced relationship. It can only be affirmed that this is true. As his solution of the problem, Brunner is forced to conclude: "The atonement in its paradoxical combination of subjective and objective . . . is the unfathomable mystery of God."[1]

Forsyth fares better in his effort at this point.[2] While Anselm thought of the appropriation of the atonement by man in terms of an external transfer of merit, and in the Reformation the act of faith was seen to be essential as the passive personal acceptance of the forensic judgment of God on the sinner, Forsyth is not content with these positions. His own view includes but seeks to go beyond that of the Reformation. Reconciliation is personal and moral or nothing, and it is rooted in the conscience of God and man alike. Forsyth places man's faith in closer relationship to the atoning Cross. This means bringing Christ's regenerative work into the picture. Holiness is only satisfied with personal communion, for only man's

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1. Brunner, The Mediator, p. 528.

2. See above, p. 188f.

loving, obedient communion gives God the glory and appreciates the moral right of Lordship which is His. Man, however, participates in such communion only by penitent faith. Thus, while man's faith is not the ground of the atonement, not the substitutionary aspect, it does have a real place in the atonement which is indicated by the representative function of Christ. The Revelation-Redemption act is not solely rational, but it is not magical, and, most importantly, it is moral through and through. While all is certainly not clear in this view, Forsyth moves closer than Brunner to an intelligibly "balanced" theory of the atonement.

With Forsyth, in contrast to Brunner, the emphasis is more on the Deity of Christ than on His humanity in the performance of His mediatorial work. This has been intimated previously in the discussion of the Plerosis where it was pointed out that Forsyth looked upon the Cross as the climax of Christ's regaining of His Godhead. From this point it is but a step to the bold declaration that: "In the death of Jesus it was God that died."[1] This would seem to be skirting close to the Patripassian heresy which Brunner so strongly renounces. However, the startling statement must be interpreted figuratively to avoid an

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1. Forsyth, "Revelation and the Person of Christ," Faith and Criticism, p. 132.

intolerable theological problem -- such a problem, it could be said, as has confronted the "Death of God" theologians in the nineteen-sixties. Forsyth is simply trying to give the greatest possible emphasis to the amazing lengths to which Holy God is willing to go in redeeming man from sin, and doing this puts language under a strain.

Brunner, as has been seen, underscores in his Dogmatics the fact that the death on the Cross is the final point of the kenosis, the completion of the Incarnation. At the Cross, in the completeness of His enfleshing, Christ is seen to be most thoroughly human. Apropos of this teaching is the comment once made by J. K. Mozley on Brunner's viewpoint in The Mediator: "While there is much in his work to remind one of Dr. Forsyth, he finds more soteriological importance in the Incarnation than Forsyth did."[1] It is even more obvious in his later writing than it was in the earlier that Brunner attaches more saving significance to the Incarnation qua incarnation than was true of Forsyth. But it need only be mentioned that his doctrine of atonement is never that of atonement through incarnation. It is always in Christ's objective work of atonement through His death, when He took upon Himself mankind's sinful and guilty condition

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1. Mozley, "Emil Brunner," The Expository Times, October 1931, p. 537.

and in "the form of a servant" passed under the Divine decree of punishment, that man receives the blessing of forgiveness.

4. The Unity of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ

Forsyth and Brunner are entirely united in their belief that the Person of Christ is to be understood in relation to His Work. Because of his theological seniority Forsyth may be permitted to speak for the two in saying, "It is the work of Christ that gives us the key to the nature of Christ."[1] The Mediator's work in overcoming the opposition between God and man is to act upon man as God and upon God as man: as God to deal with man's sin, and as man to confess and glorify the holiness of God in judging and condemning sin. Without such a conception of Christ there can be no real theory of atonement.

In building his Christology Forsyth endeavours to keep Person and Work in the closest possible connection and he succeeds well in doing this. With him, the Revelation in Christ is always Redemption and the Redemption is the Revelation. Therefore there can really be no "before" and "after" in the treatment of Person and Work in Christological construction. It makes no material difference which is discussed first since, in the end, both

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1. The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 346.

themes must be tightly interwoven.

Forsyth is constantly aware of who Christ _is_ when he writes of His work, and he is constantly aware of what Christ _does_ when he writes of His person. Guiding and clarifying, and even determining, his thought is the consciousness of his own relationship to Jesus Christ. It is from this consciousness that he can say with steady conviction: "The key to the person of Christ is to be found . . . in a positive religious experience of Him and to a crucial moral decision behind which we cannot go in the quest for life's reality."[1] This is to say that "all Christology must rest on a moral salvation, spiritually and personally realised."[2] It is from this perspective that Forsyth observes and consistently expresses the unity of the Person and Work of Christ.

Brunner has the same factors operating in his favour to produce results in his Christological labours similar to those achieved by Forsyth. With him it is also true that Christ "_is_ what He does and He _does_ what He is."[3] He likewise can give humble and sincere testimony to "encounter" with the living and saving Christ. However, he

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1. "Revelation and the Person of Christ," op. cit., p. 139.

2. _The Person and Place of Jesus Christ_, p. 332.

3. _The Mediator_, p. 490.

is forced to admit in The Divine-Human Encounter that he erred in The Mediator by conforming his thought too closely to a mistaken view of the ancient Church which "gave the Christian faith a false orientation about the Being instead of the work of Christ."[1] He therefore resolves to correct this error in the future.

When he came to the writing of his Dogmatics Brunner, as has been noted, adopted a different approach to his theological task. He now turns to inductive methodology and begins with the Work rather than the Person of Christ. However, some critics have found fault with this procedure, or at least with the way it has been employed in The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption. E. A. Dowey, for instance, points out that Brunner gives evidence of having been too successful in his new approach.[2] When the subject of the "Work" is effectively dealt with in accordance with the Truth-as-Encounter principle, as Brunner does in Chapter XI of his Dogmatics II, Dowey contends that a subsequent and separate treatment of the "Person" is rendered superfluous. "The concept of Encounter has really robbed the traditional locus on Christ's "person" of any raison d'être as a separate theological

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1. Brunner, The Divine-Human Encounter, p. 103.

2. Dowey, "Redeemer and Redeemed as Persons in History," The Theology of Emil Brunner, Kegley, ed., p. 203f.

topic."[1] This is demonstrated by the way in which Chapter XII has been largely devoted to repetition and polemic. Dowey therefore offers a suggestion and a caveat:

> The next development may well be to take more seriously the union of work and person and give a fully integrated analysis. If not, the divine "person" will continue to hover over history as a metaphysical abstraction."[2]

He goes on to recommend the strategy of two theologians who have come to a more unified conception of Work and Person by "the use of personal-voluntarist categories."[3] Brunner, however, is not familiar with the term "personal-voluntarist" and he is also suspicious of it. It might imply that man is more active in laying hold upon the truth of God in Jesus Christ through the Divine-human encounter than his presuppositions will allow. "If voluntarism should mean an ethicism, I must object. It is primarily God's and only secondarily man's action which is involved."[4] This statement indicates that Brunner would reject the personalistic-voluntarism which serves Forsyth so well in developing his thought on the unity of the

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1. Dowey, "Redeemer and Redeemed as Persons in History," Kegley, ed., op. cit., p. 204.

2. Ibidem.

3. Ibidem. G. W. Hendry, The Gospel of the Incarnation and W. J. Wolf, No Cross, No Crown.

4. Brunner, "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism," Kegley, ed., op. cit., p. 343f.

Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

It should be further noted that Brunner takes exception to Dowey's challenge to "take more seriously the union of work and person."[1] Unable to see himself as others see him, the theologian says of this exhortation: "[It] corresponds precisely to my own opinion."[2] Thus, a basic intention on the part of Brunner to maintain a close bond between the traditional loci in Christology cannot be denied. But the fulfilment of this intention leaves something to be desired. Moreover, while there is a more positive view of the historic Personality in the Dogmatics than there was in The Mediator, this writer is inclined to agree with Dowey's warning that unless Work and Person are more closely integrated the "Christ of faith" can have little real connection with the "Jesus of history."

Criticizing Brunner for the failure to unify the Person and Work, but from a theological outlook quite different from Dowey's, is G. C. Berkouwer in The Person of Christ.[3] This conservative theologian makes a direct attack upon the inductive method used in The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, maintaining that there

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1. Brunner, "Reply to Interpretation and Criticism," Kegley, ed., op. cit., p. 343.

2. Ibidem.

3. Berkouwer, The Person of Christ, pp. 104-106.

is no warrant either in the writings of the Reformers or in Scripture for such a method in Christology. Berkouwer further declares that Brunner deludes himself in thinking he can construct his doctrine of Christ in this way and remain true to his starting point:

> He aims to proceed from the work of Christ as a prerequisite for understanding His person, but in the section on the work of Christ he already treats of the "Würdenamen Jesu," as, e.g. "Son of God" and "Immanuel." . . . Hence, it is mere illusion that Brunner aims to proceed exclusively from the work of Christ. Now appears too the methodological error of Brunner's intent. In treating Christ's work he already . . . discusses His offices; so that then he is no longer able to proceed, phenomenologically and inductively from Christ's work in history. . . . The starting point of Christology will have to be the entire witness of Holy Scripture concerning both Christ's person and work.[1]

Thus, from two different theological perspectives Brunner is taken to task for failure at the same point in his Christological construction. However, as was brought out in the preceding chapter of the thesis,[2] in the last volume of his dogmatic writing Brunner gives fresh evidence of basic loyalty to the doctrine he is accused of failing to uphold. In this swing of his thought the emphasis seems to be less on the priority of the Work of Christ and more upon the complete congruence of His action and His being. This trend is certainly in closer harmony with the govern-

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1. Berkouwer, The Person of Christ, p. 106.

2. See above, p. 323f.

ing principle of Truth as Encounter, for the conception of Jesus Christ which corresponds most nearly to this Truth is not Work plus Person, as Brunner seems to be putting it in his Dogmatics II, but Work and Person as Forsyth consistently maintains in all his Christological writing.

5. Forsyth and Brunner and the Structure of Evangelical Christology

In this final section of the chapter an attempt will be made to summarize the major viewpoints of Forsyth and Brunner as these have come to light in previous discussion. The aim will be to "distil" from the extended exposition of each theologian's thought those elements which are believed to be characteristic of their respective doctrines and also required by the construction of Christology on an evangelical basis. An attempt will also be made to criticize and evaluate in a brief and incisive way the positions under comparative study. In conclusion, an estimate will be made of the potential viability which seems to be indicated by the strength or weakness of each Christological system.

In the early pages of this chapter the norms by which the Christological thought of P. T. Forsyth and Emil Brunner were to be evaluated were declared to be an inherent self-consistency and a basic congeniality with the

evangelical experience of the Christian Church. The attempt has been made to apply the first norm throughout the discussion of the Person and Work of Jesus Christ. In so doing the thought of Forsyth has been found to be remarkably free from inconsistencies, but such has not appeared to be the case with Brunner. However, it must be recognized that the latter has undertaken to construct a much more sophisticated theology for a much more sophisticated generation than that of Forsyth's day. Furthermore, the dialectical methodology which Brunner employs makes it difficult to determine just where he finally stands on important Christological issues and this undoubtedly exposes him to misinterpretation and to criticism beyond his deserving. In a spirit of wisdom and fairness Professor John Knox musingly observes, "I do not know whether Brunner would deny that any logical contradiction is involved in his statements or would simply say that the truth about Christ cannot be stated without logical contradiction."[1]

And yet, when all due allowances and excuses have been made for Brunner on methodological grounds, there still seem to be crucial points in his thought where coherency has been unnecessarily sacrificed and where the

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1. Knox, The Humanity and Divinity of Christ, p. 89fn.

theologian's Christological position is disappointingly weak. Brunner has firmly eschewed both the radical subjectivism of Bultmann and the radical objectivism of Barth, but the attempt to keep to a middle road has not always been successful. This becomes evident in his interpretation of the Jesus of history and the Christ of faith where, in spite of his insistence of the Einmaligkeit of divine Revelation, he tends to detach the "Christ in the flesh" from any real connection with the "Christ after the flesh." Also, notwithstanding his strong avowal of interest in the "believing subject" as a corrective to Barth's position, Brunner never allows to natural man a meaningful "point of contact" for the coming of the redemptive revelation in Jesus Christ. As Professor N. H. G. Robinson incisively puts it:

> Brunner rightly rejects an exclusive interest in the Jesus of history, but in doing so tends to reject any interest and to render an incarnation inconceivable. This is to say that he tends to substitute for the incarnate Christ an X where the intrusive Word of God may break through (just as this theology tends to substitute for natural man an X where God may create something new) and so to make revelation both in Christ and in human life a series of discrete events out of all relation both to the content of incarnate life and of ordinary human lives.[1]

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1. N. H. G. Robinson, Unpublished lectures in "Christology," delivered in St. Mary's College of the University of St. Andrews, Martinmas term, 1966.

The second tendency to which reference has been made poses a real threat to the "Truth as Encounter" principle which is so vital in Brunner's Christological construction. This principle loses its authority when all initiative and action is allocated to God and man is considered essentially passive as a recipient of divine revelation. On such a basis the meeting between God and man is deprived of the character of a genuine encounter. And without a genuine encounter the truth of God in Jesus Christ can only be imparted in a sheerly miraculous way. The Revelation-Redemption act becomes the deed of a divine thaumaturgist, as Forsyth would say.

While little has been said about the criterion of congeniality with the evangelical experience of the Church, the writer believes that this norm has presided implicitly over the whole discussion of Forsyth's and Brunner's thought. However, it should now be applied more explicitly to the Christologies which have been under consideration.

An incident has been reported by Professor Robinson which casts into relief the problem of determining the evangelical or non-evangelical character of various types of theology:

> In a lecture at the most recent conference of the Society for the Study of Theology, Professor D. M. Mackinnon recalled a conversation he had years before with O. C. Quick in which he had put the

> question "Where do you draw the line between orthodoxy and heterodoxy?" and had received the reply "With the clause of the Creed: 'Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven.'"[1]

In the creedal clause put forward by Professor Quick there is indeed the central and thoroughly Christocentric truth of evangelical theology. This clause embraces the vere Deus, vere homo concepts which Emil Brunner approvingly finds expressed "in lapidary simplicity, for the first time, by the Confessio Augustana."[2] Here also is the implication of the larger answer that P. T. Forsyth gives to his own inquiry: What is the Evangelical Faith? "The evangelical faith . . . rests on the supremacy of God's holiness, the profundity of man's guilt, and the finality of Christ's salvation; on the reality of guilty sin, and the centrality of holy grace."[3] The Swiss theologian would surely concur with all his heart in such a statement. Both Forsyth and Brunner believe that the Person and Work of One "Who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven" are to be understood in relation to each other and to the ultimate category of the holiness of God. It

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1. Robinson, a review of On the Love of God by John McIntyre, New College Bulletin (Martinmas, 1965), Vol. I, p. 27.

2. Brunner, The Christian Doctrine of Creation and Redemption, p. 357.

3. Forsyth, "What is the Evangelical Faith?", The British Congregationalist (September 17, 1908), p. 239.

is the obvious intention of both theologians that when the day of their discussion is ended their Christologies will be found to lie without question on the evangelical side of any such dividing line as that proposed by O. C. Quick.

In Brunner's Christological view, man in faith-encounter with the self-movement of the holy God revealed in the Person and Work of the incarnate Christ knows that He is truly God and different from God and truly Man and different from all other men. The Divine-human Christ as the self-movement of God is interpreted as the Revealer and at the same time the Revealed. Ultimately the how of these paradoxical truths is impenetrable mystery, entirely closed to the presumptuous probing of inquisitive human minds. Furthermore, Brunner believes that the reconciliation of sinful man to God and other men is the central work of Christ in whose infinite-finite existence God mediates His truth and atonement, and in whose death penitence is evoked by which men are forgiven. The "Cross-event" reveals to faith the holiness of God as Agape and the wickedness of sin and His victory over it. As man responds in faith and appropriates His work it becomes effectual for him. In the redemptive act of divine revelation there are both objective and subjective aspects in a paradoxical combination invested with unfathomable mystery.

In Forsyth's Christological view, man in the experience of personal communion with supreme Moral Reality -- God -- who is revealed in the Person and Work of Jesus Christ as Agape (holy love in action), knows that He is truly God (the descending movement of Agape) and different from God, and that He is truly man (the ascending movement of Agape) and different from all other men. His person is a moral and divine act as Love, corresponding to the needs of the world, the unity of the Person, and the holiness of God. The incarnate Christ is the ultimate form of the relation God maintains to the finite conditions which underlie the existence of His creation.

Forsyth holds that the reconciliation of sinful man to God and to other men is the central work of Jesus Christ. The holy Son of the holy Father comes to man the sinner as the "Conscience of the conscience" in personal action which is moral from beginning to end. In His satisfactionary work of holy Love, manifested in His sacrificial life, especially in His death, and subsequently in His resurrection, He awakens in man a consciousness of the wickedness of sin and of His victory over its power. The incarnate Christ kindles in man a responding love by which he is morally and spiritually renewed, thereby effecting a change in the practical relation of God to man and man to God, a change from a wrong relationship to one of Agape

and harmony. Man must respond in penitence, faith and love before Christ's work is effectual for him.

From the summarized statements of the salient features of Forsyth's and Brunner's positions it becomes apparent that both theologians have structured their Christologies on an evangelical basis. This means that their thought is in essential harmony with that view of the Person and Work of Christ to which the Scripture bears impressive witness and which has been confirmed in the experience of the Church down through the history of Christendom. It must be concluded therefore that the most significant difference in their positions cannot be determined by this criterion.

It is in the realm of the ethical that the Christological thought of Forsyth and Brunner shows the clearest divergence. With the former the action of Jesus Christ, "who for us men and for our salvation came down from heaven," is completely moral from its initiation in heavenly places to its effectual application in the earthly situation of sin and guilt. The unity of Deity and humanity in the Son of God -- God whose divinest attribute is the "infinite mobility" of His holy Love -- is therefore to be conceived not in static but in dynamic terms of "the mutual involution of two personal movements."

The key concept in the moralizing of Christological dogma arises, it should be emphasized again, out of Forsyth's deep conviction that "God wills to be inquired of" and that the Church through her theologians should resume the long movement of thought "to pierce and clarify the mystery of godliness in Christ." This can only be done, as Forsyth believes, on the basic assumption that "morality is the nature of things." God, then, is personal Moral Reality, and the unity in the one Person of the God-man must be conceived as moral, dynamic and mutual. Furthermore, the relationship of God to men must be thought of in the same terms.

Forsyth's doctrine of the union of the Divine and human in Jesus Christ demonstrates, he maintains, that "however inadequate earthly personality is to heavenly, they are not incompatible, and they are capable of the supreme mutual act of love and grace."[1] Christ can thus embody in His one Person the two movements of spiritual reality in which God and man meet. It is this line of thought that gives the Christology of P. T. Forsyth the character of being not only "evangelical" but also "ethical."

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1. The Person and Place of Jesus Christ, p. 339. This well-worded statement, to which reference has been made before, indicates a point of view that gives Forsyth flexibility in constructing a more intelligible doctrine of the revelation of God in Jesus Christ than was possible for Brunner.

As he begins his Christological thinking under the governing principle of Truth as encounter Emil Brunner faces in the same general direction as that taken by Forsyth. The revelation of holy God to sinful man involves an act of communication between God and man on a Person to person basis. God, who is absolutely unknown except as He makes Himself known, acts in accordance with His being as holy Love (Agape) and comes to man in the Divine-human Person of Jesus Christ. However, this emphasis does not deny the fact that one must also speak of an act of man. Brunner therefore identifies this act with man's "responsibility" as the distinguishing characteristic of human existence. This in brief is the setting of the stage, so to speak, for the encounter of God with man in which Truth is revealed in Christ as a saving revelation. The way would now seem to be clear for the rounding out of Brunner's Christology on an ethical as well as an evangelical basis. Yet it gradually becomes apparent that such is not to be the case.

The Christological thought of the Swiss theologian loses an earlier ethical colouration on two counts. First, in attempting to describe the union of Deity with humanity in the one Person, Brunner, after much complicated exposition, does not actually break with the old Chalcedonian formula which, as Forsyth saw it, united the "natures" on

a sheerly miraculous rather than a moral basis. In his Person/personality analysis, as well as in later discussion in which he tries to improve upon this idea, Brunner tends to make his concepts absolute in such a way that all compatibility between Divine and human is taken away. In fact, the Deus absconditus truth is given such exclusive attention that the complementary truth of the homo revelatus seems to be lost by the wayside. The conclusion of the matter in Dogmatics II is that Jesus Christ is vere Deus and vere homo in a relation that is paradoxical to the last degree with no possibility of any "reasonable" adjustment of an intractable antinomy. Brunner draws over this paradox the opaque curtain of unfathomable mystery.

So also, in the second place, the idea of the naked omnipotence of God comes to override Brunner's promising concept of man's responsive actuality in the Divine-human encounter. Brunner undoubtedly wants this to be a real encounter in the truest sense of the word, with genuine mutuality in the meeting of God and man through Jesus Christ. However, in making absolute the categories of the Formal Image of God and the Material Image of God in man, and in ruling that man's responsibility lies wholly in the formal category with the Material Image utterly lost in sin, Brunner rules out genuine mutuality in encounter.

The redemptive revelation of God in Jesus Christ becomes a marvel, a sheer wonder rather than a moral salvation morally construed in which Conscience impinges upon conscience at the "point of contact" between God and man.

Brunner's failure on the ethical side in the development of his Christology can be attributed to his inability to advance his thought sufficiently beyond the road-block of Barthian presuppositions. The over-all impression that is gleaned from Brunner's writings is that what he purposes to do in the working out of his Christology never turns out as he intended it should, though he is generally reluctant to make such an admission. An objective critic such as Dr. John Baillie diagnoses the difficulty in a very perceptive way when he observes that Brunner's position is not far enough removed from Barth's not "to be involved in confusion and unreal compromise."[1] Such confusion and compromise "spoils the picture" for what might have been a fair structure of Christology erected on both an evangelical and an ethical foundation.

However, as was shown earlier, to say that Brunner

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1. John Baillie, Our Knowledge of God (London: Oxford University Press, reprint 1959), p. 30f. The differences and similarities of the views of Barth and Brunner with respect to the "Confrontation with God" are discussed by Baillie throughout most of the first chapter of this book.

has failed does not mean that Forsyth has perfectly succeeded. The fire of his critics has been especially directed at the vulnerable point of the development of his alternative to the Two-nature Doctrine. And there is no evading the fact that such words and phrases as "Kenosis," "Plerosis" and "mutual involution of personal movements" tend to be repellent to the ordinary mind and consciousness of man. Forsyth's theory stands in need of a more attractive mode of expression, if such can be devised. It must also be conceded to the critic of "hyper-orthodox" persuasion that it is difficult to do any substantial proof-texting of Forsyth's Kenosis-Plerosis scheme. The tenor of Scripture provides the undergirding, not the text.

Notwithstanding these and other criticisms, the writer of this thesis believes that the view of Forsyth represents an impressive and constructive step forward in the development of an evangelical Christology. The banishment of a static ontology from Christological thinking would seem to be clear gain. Surely a dynamic conceptualization of the Person of Christ is more congenial with the Scriptural witness to a "verbal", as opposed to a "substantive", relationship of God to man. On a Scriptural basis it makes more sense that the Son of the "active"

Father should also be conceived in terms of moral movement.

Furthermore, if it is true that "for everything there is a season," this would seem to be the season for Christological construction that uses the category of the dynamic for its truest expression. In a day when the concordant testimony of the physical sciences is that movement -- like morality for Joseph Butler -- is the very nature of things, and in a day when men everywhere are drawn body and spirit to "where the action is," there is peculiar timeliness to the Christ-talk of Forsyth with its thoroughgoing emphasis on the dynamic. And while the correlative emphasis on the moral is not in current fashion, this is a vicissitude which must inevitably pass. For, as Forsyth saw it, it is in the realm of the moral that religion comes to grips with life, a fact that is illustrated in the Bible from cover to cover and confirmed again and again in human experience.

P. T. Forsyth has truly made a valiant effort to cope with the Christological problem bequeathed to the Church by Chalcedon. He has proposed an alternative way of regarding the Person of Jesus Christ which, while maintaining a remarkably firm grasp on His true Deity and His true humanity, has managed to avoid to a great extent the errors of Docetism on the one hand and Ebionism or Adoptionism on the other. This, as has been seen, has

been accomplished through the device of Kenotic Theory, which, in spite of many fault-finders, is still approved by thinkers of repute as a means of providing helpful insights not only into the Person of Jesus Christ but also into the nature of God and the nature of man.[1]

Emil Brunner, denying to reason any real capacity for throwing light upon the doctrine of the Deity and the humanity in the one Person, sees the answer to the problem in a paradox of permanent opaqueness and unfathomable mystery. This to Brunner is the way the matter stands from here to eternity. References to the concepts of paradox and mystery are made with almost depressing frequency throughout his Christological writing. While it is not to be denied that these concepts are indispensable in any attempt of the human mind to lay hold upon the things of God, their indiscriminate use neither gives glory to God who wills to make Himself known to man nor grants due dignity to man created as a rational creature for communion with his Maker. Furthermore such use tends to detract from the genuine validity of these concepts in interpreting divine revelation.[2] Forsyth shows much more wisdom

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1. Cf. Vincent Taylor, The Person of Christ in New Testament Teaching (London: Macmillan, 1966), Chap. XIX: "Christology and the Kenosis"; Dawe, The Form of a Servant, passim, but especially Chap. IX: "Kenosis in a New Key."

2. Cf. Ronald W. Hepburn, Christianity and Paradox

and discretion than Brunner in this area of comparison. He refuses to lean in resignation against the barrier of the paradoxical, but instead, he probes that barrier with a reverent and relentless mind. This attitude and approach have led to deeper Christological insights than would otherwise have been the case.

With respect to these deeper insights of Forsyth, it is he rather than Brunner who has shown the possibility of thinking of the Deity and the humanity of Jesus Christ other than in the inadequate and outmoded terms of an age long past. Again, it is he rather than Brunner who identifies this Christ as One who enters the world from the transcendent realm not as an alien invader in opposition to its fundamental order but who, as Christus Creator and Christus Redemptor is, in a real sense, "at home" in the world -- a world which God the Father manifestly loves and which is filled with sacramental, though not saving, intimations of His presence. And yet again, it is Forsyth rather than Brunner who sees in the human will and conscience the necessary prius for the downcoming Love (Agape) of God in Christ Jesus so that mutuality is established for a genuine encounter between Holy God and

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(London: Watts, 1958), Chap. II: "Coping With Paradox": G. C. Berkouwer, The Person of Christ, Chap. XIII: "Christ Incognito?"

sinful man through the divine act of Revelation-Redemption which, to the greater glory of God, is thoroughly moral from beginning to end.

Therefore, in conclusion, it is the opinion of the writer that sufficient evidence has been adduced in this thesis to show that the type of Christology developed by Peter Taylor Forsyth deals more fruitfully and convincingly with major Christological problems and therefore holds more promise of continuing as a viable doctrine of the Person and Work of Christ than does that of Emil Brunner.

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